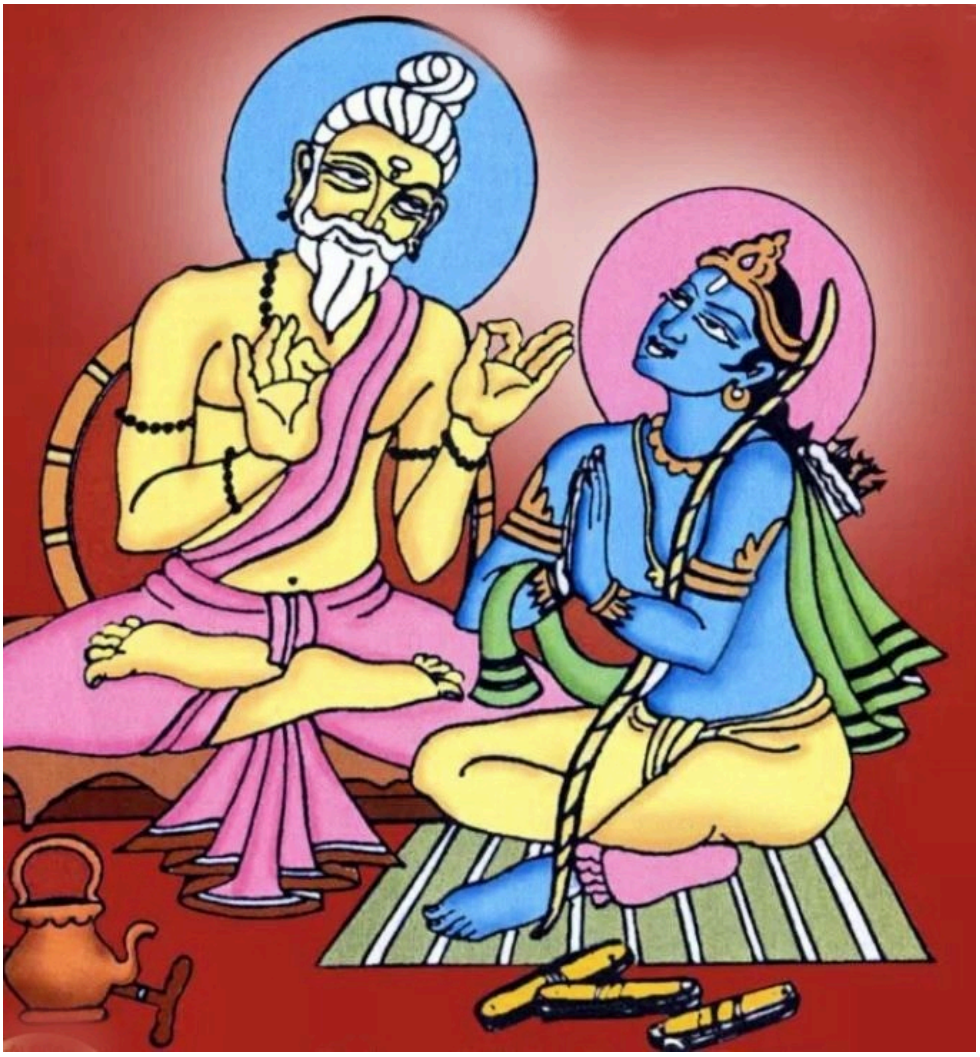

# YOGA VASISHTA


in English by Dr. Ramesam Vemuri

Based on the original book in Telugu by

BRAHMASRI KUPPA VENKATA KRISHNA MURTY


## BOOK 6

## Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa - Pūrvārdha

## LIBERATION - PART 1


Revised edition 2025

# YOGA VASISHTA

## BOOK 6

## Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa - Pūrvārdha

## LIBERATION - PART 1

**About the Book**

Yoga Vasishta is a treasure house of ancient Indian philosophical wisdom. It offers logical and practical answers to questions like: What is Mind? What is the world? What is the purpose of existence? What is Brahman?

It is a poetic classic by the Sage Valmiki explaining the nature of The Supreme Self expounded in his own inimitable and graceful way as a Discourse between Maharshi Vasishta and Lord Sri Rama.

The present volume, "Yoga Vasishta"– Book 6
Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa- Pūrvārdha - 'Liberation' Part 1
is based on a presentation in Telugu by


**Brahmasri Kuppa Venkata Krishna Murty**

**Vidyadhikari and Editor, Bhaktimala, Sri Ganapathi Sachchidananda Ashram, Mysore, India**


and forms a part of his lectures on "Yoga Vasishta" telecast in Telugu by Gemini TV, Hyderabad, Telangana State, India.

This volume is a rendering of the same into English by

**Dr. Ramesam Vemuri,**
Former Adviser, Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, New Delhi, India.


In the chapter on 'Liberation' (Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa), the attainment of liberation is expounded at length. This chapter has two parts, viz.
the first part, Pūrvārdha and the second part, Uttarārdha.
The subject is ably condensed and lucidly explained in 14,500 Slokas.
Due to the enormity of this narration and the vivid distinction in the content, the two parts are presented as two books -

**Yoga Vasishta - Book 6 - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa - Pūrvārdha - Liberation - Part 1,**
**Yoga Vasishta - Book 7 - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha - Liberation - Part 2**

*pūrvardha* comprises the steps of Deep Meditation (*samādhi yoga*) to be followed in order to attain the Ultimate Calmness of mind. *uttarārdha* deals with the way one stabilizes oneself in Eternal Bliss without being distracted after achieving it by following the steps described in *pūrvārdha.*

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# Yoga Vasishta

## Book - 6

## Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa - Pūrvārdha

## (LIBERATION) - PART 1

**AUTHOR'S SUBMISSION**

Why does an author keep the core message of his writing hidden deep inside his heart ?

He does so with the hope that the teaching would shine with double the vigor when a reader finally finds it. Because of that reason, he doesn't seal it securely in an iron vault; he only tucks it behind the tender petals of a colorful flower. His wish is that his heart should be accessible– but only to those readers who make a little effort to unravel it. Thus goes the thinking of great writers and poets; and in there lies the inner meaning of their poetic works.

The Celebrated Poet Kalidasa described the Sage Valmiki as the greatest of the spiritual guides. These words are very apt with respect to Yoga Vasishta. The poetic skills of any author may sparkle all by themselves when telling the story of a noble warrior and King like Shri Rama, or in narrating the end of the demon, Ravana. But writing a tome on the theme of a bone dry and abstruse subject like Vedanta with lyrical beauty, extending the text to 32,000 verses without losing the gravity in the discussions or the detail in narration in a gripping manner till the very end bespeaks of the immense capability of the Sage Valmiki. No other writer has attained such levels of excellence to date.

I consider myself blessed. Thanks to the benevolence and grace showered on me by my Gurus, Swami Janardanananda Saraswati and Swami Sri Ganapati Sachchidananda, I could fathom without much of an effort on my part, the depths of Sage Valmiki's heart and his teaching contained in Yoga Vasishta. With the purpose of sharing my understanding with all my fellow-seekers, I began a series of discourses on Yoga Vasishta on Gemini TV.

Inspired by the words of my teachers, I was tempted to investigate the inner meaning of Sage Valmiki's teaching. I was aided in my search by the redoubtable Saint Shri Ananda Bhodendra Saraswati Swami. His voluminous commentary on Yoga Vasishta under the title "tātparyaprakāśa vyākhya" repeatedly helped me in capturing the heights of knowledge disseminated in the text. This gave me the courage to gain the fruits of studying Yoga Vasishta.

Let me first introduce the venerable text Yoga Vasishta.

**About Yoga Vasishta**:

1. **Author**: Sage Valmiki
2. **Period of writing**: Some time after the completion of his earlier book, Ramayana.
3. **Alternate names** by which this book is known: jnānavāśiṣṭha, vāśiṣṭharāmāyaṇa, ūttara rāmāyaṇa, mahārāmāyaṇa, vāśiṣṭha etc. etc.

4. **Size of the text**: The original text of the *Yoga Vasishta* is traditionally said to comprise 32,000 verses. However, some scholars opine that the actual count may be less than 30,000 (based on the Nirnaya Sagar 1937 Edition). It should be noted that quantifying a work of such a magnitude and intricacy is a complex task. Ultimately, an overly critical investigation into the exact verse count offers little value to the reader in terms of absorbing the text's spiritual message.
5. **Subject matter**: Inquiry into the Supreme Self. It comprises the teaching given to the 12 year old prince Rama by the Sages Vishwamitra and Vasishta. The book establishes that the man enlightened by the wisdom of knowing the highest truth will be able to function with excellence in this world.
6. **The style of Narration and other specialtie**s:

- The gist of each topic to be discussed is summarized upfront.
- The subject is illustrated through a captivating story.
- The symbolical significance of the characters used in the stories is explained by the author himself.
- The object of the text is not about the denying or contradicting any other theories.
- There are no polemic debates.
- The author raises a number of questions from various angles and answers them himself.
- Though the subject matter is that of tough Vedanta, one can see the poetic skills of the author at innumerable instances.
- The text is full of unimaginable metaphors that capture the reader's heart.
- The dominant Sanskrit meter used in this composition is *Anustup Chandas*, a rhythmic structure traditionally employed in spiritual texts. According to the rules of this meter, each *sloka* consists of 32 syllables. In this context, it is interesting to consider the mystery and significance of the number 32 in Sanskrit literature and Hindu philosophy. The number 32 represents completeness, a set of significant spiritual principles, or a state of divine order and balance. While the *Anustup* meter prevails, Sage Valmiki also employs other meters to suit specific contextual nuances within the work.

7. **Abridged Versions:**

- As the text is quite voluminous, many condensed versions of the book have been prepared both in the Northern and Southern parts of India. Some of the more popular versions are:
- The text by the Kashmiri Pundit Abhinandana comprising 6,000 verses.
- The text by Shri Swami Vidya Prakasananda Giri, Head of the Shukabrahma Ashram, Kalahasti having 8,000 verses.

8. **Translations:** Translations of the text are available in almost all languages. There are six translations in Telugu language itself -- five in prose form and one as verses. I consulted all these books in my work and I am indebted to those authors. Out of these, the translation by Shri M. Subbaraya Sharma was particularly helpful to me.

9. **Expert views:** Yoga Vasishta is highly revered not only during the old historical times, but also in modern days by the spiritual teachers.

For example:

- Swami Ramatirtha described Yoga Vasishta as the "most wonderful" text.
- The book is highly revered by the Malayala Swami, The Head of the Erpedu Vyasa Ashram.
- Yoga Vasishta is acclaimed as the foremost amongst the books on Advaita by the Head of Gayatri Peetha.

**10. Structure of Yoga Vasishta:**

There are six chapters in the text.

- *Vairāgyaprakaraṇa* -- On Detachment -- 1,500 verses -This first chapter describes in detail the feelings of detachment experienced by Shri Rama.
- *Mumukśu Vyavahāra Prakaraṇa* – On the Conduct of a spiritual Aspirant -- 1,000 verses. This second chapter gives the details of the basic qualities to be attained by a spiritual aspirant. The importance of human effort in achieving liberation is discussed and it has been established that it is necessary that an effort should be made to obtain liberation.
- *Utpattiprakaraṇa* – On Origination -- 7,000 verses –This third chapter examines the reality of the visible world and if it has been created at all.
- *Sthitiprakaraṇa* – On Sustenance -- 3,000 verses – This fourth chapter investigates how the apparent world is sustained.
- *Upaśamaprakaraṇa* – On the Calm Down -- 5,000 verses - This fifth chapter talks of the method of obtaining a tranquil mind through True Knowledge.
- *Nirvāṇaprakaraṇa* – On Liberation -- 14,500 verses –This sixth and the final chapter is the largest wherein the achievement of Liberation is discussed thoroughly. It is divided into two parts - *Pūrvārdha and Uttarārdha*.

11. **Commentaries:** It is said that there are many commentaries in Sanskrit on YogaVasishta. However, only "tātparyaprakāśikā" by Swami Ananda Bhodhendra Saraswati is available in print. It was published by the NirnayaSagar Press in 1937. This commentary has received accolades from many learned pundits.

**About Author Valmiki:** It is opined by some experts that the author Valmiki of Yoga Vasishta was different from the author Valmiki of Ramayana. One group of such people belong to those that are opposed to Non-dualist philosophy. Their main concern is only to deprecate the importance of Yoga Vasishta as it is an unrivalled text on Non-duality. The other group contends that an evaluation on the authorship is called for using modern techniques rather than going by the word of tradition. Let us examine critically the various arguments advanced by this group.

The writing style of both Ramayana and Yoga Vasishta is about the same. In fact, no critic has been able to point out any major differences. However, some of these critics ask why there is not even a hint made about Yoga Vasishta in Ramayana. The answer to this question is available right in the first chapter of Yoga Vasishta. One may take a look.

The second argument is that because we find reference to Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna, Arjuna, Sage Suka and others in Yoga Vasishta, it should belong to a period later than that of Bhagavad-Gita. But if we keep in mind the caliber and skill of a writer who could handle a complex and intricate subject as Advaita Vednata with such a dexterity as found in the book, it is unlikely that we will be persuaded to conclude that such an enlightened and exceptionally competent author belonging to a later period would have tried to create a false impression about the date of his work. Hence, it is untenable to argue that it belongs to the post-Bhagavad-Gita period.

A question may, however, arise about the reference to the events of later eons (*yuga*) in the text. But inclusion of a reference to the events that are likely to take place at a future date is quite typical of the Sage Valmiki. He did so in his other and more popular work, Ramayana too. In fact, in the Balakanda of Ramayana, his narration cuts across past, present and future times in the description of different events. Sage Valmiki resorts to this type of narrating the future in uttarakanda of Ramayana also. Thus the narration of future events as seen by him through clairvoyance is a characteristic of the Sage Valmiki. It is no wonder that we find examples of such descriptions of future events in Yoga Vasishta also. In fact, whenever a future event is described, the author raises a question through one of the characters in the book about the chronological inconsistency and a suitable reply is given right there. Readers familiar with the works of other great Seers and Sages do not find this style of writing odd at all. For example, we find future events being narrated at a current time in Agastya Samhita. Sage Vyasa authored an entire purana which describes the future events only.

Thus when viewed with an unbiased eye, it is inevitable to conclude that the author of Yoga Vasishta and Ramayana was one and the same poet.

Further, we have to note that the Sage Valmiki was not only a writer *par excellence*, but also a great Maharishi. The word 'Rishi' in Sanskrit means the one who realized the ultimate Truth (*tatva*). A true writer is one who can speak accurately. Because he has both these qualities, he could write with such a depth of understanding and beauty. We notice several instances of this signature style of the Sage in both Ramayana and Yoga Vasishta.

I studied and tried to decipher the core message of Yoga Vasishta and the commentaries on it with the same spirit. I took help from elders, prayed to my teachers, and also consulted the teachings of Shri Janardanananda Swami who was not only a noble saint but also happened to be my father before his renunciation of the world. What I could understand is presented by me in my discourses that were telecast by the Gemini TV and the same is now offered in the form of a text. That is the reason it is called as the 'heart' of Yoga Vasishta.

We find a variation in spelling of the name of the Sage Vasishta. It is written in the Devanagari script both as Vaśiṣṭha and Vasiṣṭha. Both ways are correct as the former spelling is derived to mean as the one who conquered his senses and the latter one means the one who excelled as a householder.

Sage Vasishta himself clarified that writing his name either way was acceptable as quoted in a verse in Mahabharata (Canto 13, Chapter 63, verse 96). I adopted 'Vaśiṣṭha' in my writings as it would emphasize the importance of control, over the senses which is an important requisite in the study of Vedanta.

**Acknowledgements**:

All words are inadequate to express my indebtedness to my Teacher, Swami Ganapati Sachchidnananda. Therefore, I dedicate this work to him. I am also grateful to Gemini TV for telecasting my discourses. I tried to present the teaching contained in Yoga Vasishta in a logical manner and with a modern idiom. Please condone any omissions or commissions. However, my request to the readers is that this presentation should not be treated to be a condensation or abridgement of the original text. It is an effort to capture the "core" message and please study it in that spirit.

I am only nominally there in delivering this message. The inner sentient principle that motivates, acts and speaks is different. I pray to my Gurus to channel the Grace of that inexplicable principle to all in experientially realizing It.

Salutations to the Gurus.

Kuppa Venkata Krishna Murthy

## 1. What is *nirvāna*

Sage Valmiki's opus, Yoga Vasishta consisting of six chapters can be broadly divided into two major modules. The first module comprises the initial two Chapters, Detachment (*Vairagya*) and The Conduct of A Spiritual Aspirant (*Mumukshu Vyavahara Prakaranas*) which are mainly introductory in nature. The subsequent three Chapters that follow them deal with Origination (*Utpatti*), Sustenance (*Sthiti*) and Calming Down the mind (*Upasama Prakaranas*) respectively of the universe. What is there to be discussed further when once the universe was dissolved ?

From the standpoint of the theoretical exposition of the subject matter, the theory had been covered fully in the two Chapters on Origination and Sustenance. The Chapter that came next was not called Dissolution; instead it was titled, "The Calm Down." The Chapter on The Calm Down dealt exhaustively with the practical aspects of calming down the mind. By now both the theory and the praxis had been fully expounded from all perspectives. What is it that remains to be explained in one more chapter?

Sage Vasishta considered contemplation on Aum to be a very important means of achieving liberation in his discourse in the Chapter on The Calm Down. He pointed out that Aum consisted of the four sounds 'A', 'U', 'M' and a half note. Knowledgeable people following the tradition of contemplation on Aum say that the sound 'A' represents creation, 'U' represents sustenance and 'M' represents calming down. They consider the fourth half note to signify the indistinct 'hum' of the three states. If we accept this approach, chapters on creation, sustenance and calming down corresponding to 'A', 'U' and 'M' were completed. It may be remembered that it is the half note, which actually brings forth Oneness by merging the sound with soundlessness and the seeker with what is sought. The sought is Liberation (*nirvāṇa*) and this chapter deals with that subject.

At the beginning of the Chapter on Sustenance (Book 3 in our Series on Yoga Vasishta), it had been clearly indicated that Creation, Sustenance and Calming Down the Mind were transitory qualities temporarily assumed by Brahman and that they would not permanently adhere to Brahman. It was also mentioned at that time that His true nature was *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (Existence- Consciousness-Bliss). After completing a discussion on the transitory characteristics of Brahman, there is still a need for a chapter to explicate the true characteristics of Brahman. That is the reason why Sage Valmiki introduced the Chapter on 191Liberation (*nirvāna*) as the sixth and final chapter of Yoga Vasishta.

While meditating on Aum, the final sound of the half note is pronounced for an extended period. As if to imply this, Sage Valmiki stretched the Chapter on Liberation (*nirvāna)* to a length of 14, 500 verses. (The rest of the five chapters together constitute only about 17,500 verses). The indistinct three sounds of AUM existing in the half note generate a new force in the half note.

Accordingly, the very same issues that were explained earlier are again taken up for a detailed exposition, but one does not feel any redundancy. A seeker achieves a consolidation of his experiential attainments with further clarity and certitude in this chapter. Elders, therefore, look upon this chapter with utmost respect and high regard.

A question may come up about the title of the chapter. It was not christened as Salvation“ (*mokśa*)” but called Liberation (*nirvāna* ). The Sanskrit root derivation is ‘**वा – गति गन्धनयोः**’ ‘*vā – gati gandhanayoḥ*’ . It means ‘to move or to indicate’. Adding a suffix, the derivative form becomes ‘**वानं**’ ‘*vānaṃ*’ indicating movement. The prefix ‘**निर्**’ ‘*nir*’ makes it ‘**निर्वाणं**’ ‘*nirvāṇaṃ*’ . Under the influence of the prefix, the original meaning gets further modified and changes to an implied meaning of “Bliss.”

The words ‘**निर्वाणं**’ ‘*nirvāṇaṃ,* ‘**भेषजं**’ *‘bheṣajaṃ’* and ‘ **भिषक्**’ ‘*bhiṣak*’ have been used as synonyms of Supreme Consciousness in the 1,000 names in praise of Lord Vishnu (Verse 75). Shri Adi Shankara explained in his commentary on the Thousand Names of Lord Vishnu as follows:

**सर्व दुःकोपशम लक्षणं परमानन्द रूपं निर्वाणं**

*sarva duḥkopaśama lakṣaṇaṃ paramānanda rūpaṃ nirvāṇaṃ*

Shankara Bhashya on Vishnu Sahasra Nama, Verse 75

‘*nirvāṇa* alleviates all misery and has the form of supreme beatitude’.

One may, therefore, infer from this that traditionally the word nirvana was used to indicate the supreme bliss experienced in the state beyond sorrow and misery, viz. Salvation.

Because the root derivation ‘**वा – गति गन्धनयोः**’ ‘*vā – gati gandhanayoḥ*’ has the meaning of ‘movement’, *nirvāṇa* (with negation by ‘*nir*’) also implies “stable, unwavering state.” Only the all-pervading, ever-perfect and infinite Brahman can be motionless. Thus *nirvāṇa* can mean the Supreme Self or Brahman.

Vedas define Brahman as ’**सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं**’ ‘*satyaṃ jñānaṃ anantaṃ*’ (Truth, Knowledge and Infinity)” and ‘**नित्यं ,विज्ञानं, आनन्दम्**’ ‘*nityaṃ ,vijñānaṃ, ānandam*’ (Eternity, Wisdom and Bliss). Combining these two sentences, it can be inferred that whatever is infinity that itself is bliss, that itself is Brahman. The word *nirvāṇa* also means the same. Such a state is possible only in *mokśa* (salvation). Hence *nirvāṇa* is used in the sense of salvation. For instance, Shri Gaudapada used the word *nirvāṇa* as follows:

‘**सुखं निर्वाति वेदवित्**’ ‘*sukhaṃ nirvāti vedavit*’

*nirvāti* is another derivative form for *nirvāṇa*. He used it to denote ‘transcending’, ‘attaining salvation.’

From the above discussion, we may conclude that the great poet Valmiki titled this chapter as *nirvāṇa* to indicate the culminating goal of all seekers, the final space where the half note of *Aum* gets absorbed viz., salvation as established by Vedic scriptures.

A few commentators observe that the word ‘*nirvāṇa*’ is popular with the Buddhists and usage of such a word shows that Yogavaasishta belongs to the post-Buddha period. Assigning a date to Yoga Vasishta is not our concern here.

However, we may suggest that it would be better for those that would like to date this work to post-Buddha period to look for evidence other than usage of the word *nirvāṇa*. For, first of all, Buddhists did not coin the word ‘*nirvāṇa*’. It predates Buddhism. *nirvāṇa* appears in many well-known works like The *Mahabharata*. A famous example is:

ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृच्छति *brahmanirvāṇamṛcchati*

Bhagavad Gita, Chapter II, Verse 71

**2. Recapitulating Previous Lessons**

What had been established using the transitional attributes of Brahman is being reaffirmed in the current chapter with reference to the true attributes of Brahman. Hence we may expect quite a bit of replication of what had been already taught. But the skilful narration of the great Sages Valmiki and Vasishta is such that it never gives us a feeling of tiresome redundancy. Even Rama many a time alludes to a past discourse in his questions while requesting for further clarification. At other places Sage Vasishta himself reminds Rama that that particular topic was explained earlier and beseeches him for more attentive listening while he (Vasishta) elucidates it further. Sage Vasishta holds that Vedanta is a very deep subject and unless and until one examines it from several angles, it cannot be fully comprehended.

Because the Chapter Liberation (*Nirvāṇa Prakarana*) is too long (14, 500 verses), Sage Valmiki divided it into two convenient sections. Part I comprises the steps of Deep Meditation (*samādhi yoga*) to be followed in order to attain the Ultimate Calmness of mind. Part II deals with the way one stabilizes oneself in Eternal Bliss without being distracted after having once achieved it following the steps described in Part 1. Due to the enormity of this narration and the vivid distinction in the content, the two parts are presented as two books -

Yoga Vasishta - Book 6 - Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Pūrvārdha - Liberation - Part 1,
Yoga Vasishta - Book 7 - Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Uttarārdha - Liberation - Part 2

Both books offer an occasion to the reader to assess himself/herself with respect to each of the topics expounded. It will be highly advantageous to revisit a topic and examine how and in what manner it was explained earlier and remember the original context when it was first explained. One should note carefully the change in the way a topic is re-confirmed, the novelty adopted in the exposition and the freshness added to it. Only thus the objective of reading this chapter is fulfilled.

Let us now with the kind blessings of the Gurus take up the study of the current chapter attempting to synthesize the previous and present explanations.

We may recall that *Upasama Prakarana,* the chapter on 'The Calm Down' in Yoga Vasishta opened with the following description: Sage Vasishta closed the morning session of teaching by noon itself so that the disciples could have a chance to mentally revise what was taught thus far. Rama did not go to bed all through the night but reviewed in his mind sequentially the lessons he learnt. The daily ablution routine followed by Rama and the Royalty of the day as well as the routine of Sage Vasishta were narrated in detail by Sage Valmiki at this juncture.

The current Chapter on Liberation *(Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa)* too opens up with a similar narration. One difference, however, is that Sage Vasishta ended the day's teaching in the evening. Everyone attended to their evening prayers and prescribed routines. They reassembled for the discourse the next morning.

No sooner than all were seated, Sage Vasishta enquired from Rama whether he did a thorough review of the past lessons. Without waiting for Rama's reply, he himself proceeded to summarize what was thus far taught. His summary contained many brilliant aphorisms.

For example,

**जीवन्मुक्ता महात्मानो ये परावरदर्शिनः ।**
**तेषां या चित्तपदवी सा सत्त्वमिति कथ्यते ।।**
**जीवन्मुक्तशरीरेषु वासना व्यवहारिणी ।**
**न चित्तनाम्नी भवति सा हि सत्त्वपदं गता ।।**

*jīvanmuktā mahātmāno ye parāvaradarśinaḥ |*
*teṣāṃ yā cittapadavī sā sattvamiti kathyate ||*
*jīvanmuktaśarīreṣu vāsanā vyavahāriṇī |*
*na cittanāmnī bhavati sā hi sattvapadaṃ gatā ||*

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Pūrvārdha, Sarga 2, Slokas 42, 43

"Rama! A man should become a *jīvanmuktā* right in this life practicing various methods of calming down the mind. He should attain the Supreme Self. He should become a Mahatma. However, please note that some worldly matters remain to be attended to even after the attainment of *jīvanmukti* . You may say that involvement in worldly affairs automatically implies the presence of a remnant mind. The state of such a man's mind will be like the ripple marks on the sands of an island after the floods have receded. They appear as waves in the sands. But are they really waves ? The mind of a *jīvanmuktā* will also be like that. Therefore, it is given a new name as "*sattva*" instead of '*chitta*'.

"What does '*chitta*' mean? 'c*hitta*' is the ensemble of the 'impressions' (*vāsanās*) and is responsible for the conduct of worldly affairs. Let me reiterate this. The assemblage of impressions that are present in one who is involved with worldly actions is '*chitta*'. The residual mind existing in a realized individual is '*sattva*'."

We may note that this issue was talked about already in the past. The new thing brought out here by Sage Vasishta is the nomenclature of *chitta* and *sattva* and an emphasis on the difference between the two. Sage Vasishta extended a recap of his teachings in a similar manner till the end of the fourth Sarga.

Rama declared in unequivocal terms that he was not enticed by the world any more and he understood the essence of Sage Vasishta's teaching.

**अनुभववशतो हृदब्जकोशे स्फुटमलितां समुपागतेन नाथ ।**
**तव वरवचसेह वीतशोकां चिरमुदितां च दशामुपागतोऽस्मि ।।**

*anubhavavaśato hṛdabjakośe sphuṭamalitāṃ samupāgatena nātha |*
*tava varavacaseha vītaśokāṃ ciramuditāṃ ca daśāmupāgato'smi ||*

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Pūrvārdha, Sarga 5, Sloka 16

"Revered Teacher! Your lovely words are glued to my heart like dragonflies to a lotus. Because of your words I achieved an enduring state of experience beyond sorrow and misery."

The fifth Sarga was closed with the above verse (sloka).

**3. Let me Repeat**

The sixth Sarga marks the real beginning of *Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Pūrvārdha*, Liberation, Book 6 of Yoga Vasishta.

Any teacher would have been extremely pleased with Rama's declaration as above. However, Sage Vasishta calmly recommenced his teaching with the following words:

**Vasishta:**

**भूय एव महाबाहो श्रृणु मे परमं वचः ।**
**यत्तेऽहं प्रीयमाणाय वक्ष्यामि हितकाम्यया ।।**
**भेदमभ्युपगम्यापि श्रृणु बुद्धिविवृद्धये ।**
**भवेदल्पप्रबुद्धानामपि नो दुःखिता यथा ।।**

*bhūya eva mahābāho śrṛṇu me paramaṃ vacaḥ |*
*yatte'haṃ prīyamāṇāya vakṣyāmi hitakāmyayā || 1*
*bhedamabhyupagamyāpi śrṛṇu buddhivivṛddhaye |*
*bhavedalpaprabuddhānāmapi no duḥkhitā yathā ||*

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Pūrvārdha, Sarga 6, Slokas 1, 2

"Rama! Let me once again repeat my teaching for your benefit because of my love for you. Please pay attention to this. You may feel that you have heard what is all there to be heard and have already achieved an experiential understanding. You may think that you do not need any further coaching. But that is incorrect.

"You may say that you do not see a fragmented world. You may not cognize any difference between the teacher and the disciple. Distinction between the speaker and listener may not be evident to you. You may not distinguish the sound that is heard by you to be separate from yourself. Even if you have all these experiences, assume that there is a difference, accept duality and take note carefully in order to firm up your realization."

(**Note:** The real intention of Sage Vasishta comes out clearly in the last line of the above verse)

"Rama, you have to listen, though you may not need it, for the sake of the dullards listening to me. Repetition is necessary in order to improve their intellect. Sorrow should not revisit them. Therefore, you should pay attention to what I say. You may doubt if any minds would remain dull after listening to so much of my teaching. The sensory organs recoil with revenge on a seeker exposed to this vast philosophical thought indicating an identity between him/her and the Universe in case he/she is not totally free of identifying himself/herself with his/her body. In contrast, the organs of the body will collaborate and extend friendly cooperation to the seeker who completely rids himself/herself of identification with the body and then contemplates on the infinite Brahman. Hence an individual who is still at an intermediary stage has to constantly meditate and contemplate every minute on what is taught even after he/she obtains a onetime experiential understanding. The seeker should relentlessly see clearly the distinction between the body-mind and the Self within."

Introducing the subject thus, Sage Vasishta continued with his elaboration on the impermanence, finiteness and unreality of both the body and the visible world in the seventh and eighth Sargas. He said towards the end of the eighth Sarga as follows:

महाविषलतैषा हि संसारविषमूर्च्छनाम् ।
ददाति रभसाश्लिष्टा परामृष्टा विनश्यति ।।

*mahāviṣalataiṣā hi saṃsāraviṣamūrcchanām |*
*dadāti rabhasāśliṣṭā parāmṛṣṭā vinaśyati ||*

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Pūrvārdha, Sarga 8, Sloka 25

"Rama! Nescience is a poisonous creeper. If you touch it, the poison spreads fast. If, instead, you examine it from a distance without touching, it is totally destroyed. Behold! It is water here; but a solid rock over there. It is cool moonlight at this place; it is hot burning sun over there. A leaf flutters over here and there is the fast gale causing the flutter. Heaven on one side; hell on the other. *Viśnu* at one place, *Brahma* at another and *śiva* at still another. It is *rudra* here and *yama* there. What is all this differentiation? Is it not a reflection of ignorance? Therefore, Rama, you should go beyond these separations. You should transcend ignorance. Only then is liberation certain.

यत्किंचनाङ्ग भुवनेषु महामहिम्नाव्याप्तं जरत्तृणलवत्वमुपागतं वा ।
दृश्यं स्फुरन्नन्नु हराद्यपि तामविद्यां विद्धि क्षयाय तदतीततयात्मलाभः ।।

*yatkiṃcanāṅga bhuvaneṣu mahāmahimnā-*
*vyāptaṃ jarattṛṇalavatvamupāgataṃ vā |*
*dṛśyaṃ sphurannanu harādyapi tāmavidyāṃ*
*viddhi kṣayāya tadatītatayātmalābhaḥ ||*

Nirvāṇa prakaraṇa - Pūrvārdha, Sarga 8, Sloka 32

"Rama! Whether it is a mighty humongous object or a thin dried up emaciated weed of grass, it is merely a percept in the world. Anything perceived either by the sensory organs or by the mind is a percept. Know that everything right from *iśvar* on gets annihilated. The essence of Truth can be understood only when you cross these ephemerals."

**4. Trinity is Also Within Nescience**

**Rama:** "How is it Teacher? The Vedas declare

स ब्रह्म स शिवः स हरिः सेन्द्रः सोऽक्षरः परमः स्वराट् ॥
दृश्यं स्पुरनन्नन्नु हराद्यपि तमविद्यां

*sa brahma sa śivaḥ sa hariḥ sendraḥ so'kṣaraḥ paramaḥ svarāṭ ||*
*dṛśyaṃ spuranannanu harādyapi tamavidyāṃ*

The Supreme Consciousness is the four-faced *brahma, śiva, viśnu, indra, akśara and svarāt* (Self-illumined). Thus the *vedās* declare that *Brahma* and all other Gods are a form of the Supreme Consciousness. But you are counting all of them as part of nescience. When I hear this from you, I am getting utterly confused by these contradictions."

**Vasishta**: "Rama, when we discuss the deep philosophical issues, we should not forget which statement is used in what context and with reference to what. At present we are discussing the Pure form of Existence-Consciousness. It is prior to creation. The entire universe was in the form of Existence-Consciousness-Brilliance.

A throb occurred in It. It is called "a flash-wave of the false appearance of Pure Consciousness as ego (F-FAPC - *cidābhāsa sphūrti*)." *cidābhāsa sphūrti* means manifestation of I-consciousness, an ego. It emerged from the Pure Existence-Consciousness-Brahman. How did it come about? It originated like turbulence in water. Turbulence in water does not mean that a new substance has originated. The very same water assumed a new form. Nothing more than that. What is the new form made up of? It is also water! A new name is given even in the absence of a new material. The new name is I- consciousness. That is the beginning of ignorance. That is "F-FAPC - *cidābhāsa sphūrti*

"For a detailed scrutiny, let us divide this transformation into three segments – subtle, intermediate and gross. The intermediate form has taken the shape of 'mind'. It further expanded and became Hiranyagarbha. He inflated further and has become Gross *virāt*. Gross *virāt* is nothing but the visible world.

There is yet another way to classify this transformation. It is based on the constituent qualities of ignorance – *satva, rajas* and *tamas*. Each of these in turn comprises three subdivisions – the subtle, intermediate and the gross. Thus there are in total nine subdivisions in nescience (*Prakriti* – nature). Every visible thing in the world is a mix of these nine constituents of ignorance (nescience). Let us develop a matrix of the objects in the world based on these admixtures of components right from Hiranyagarbha to the solid substances like rocks. As per this matrix, Brahma, Vishnu and other gods fall in the cell of *satva* within *satva* within *satva*."

**Rama:** "If the three components are *satva* only, the component parts must be indistinguishable like say water within water within water! If there is no difference between them, how did they acquire a distinction as Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and so on?"

**Vasishta:** "If in the third cycling traces of rajas get added, he becomes Brahma. He becomes Rudra (Shiva) if traces of *tamas* get admixed. Pure untainted *satva* is Vishnu. Though we may say that traces of other qualities are blended in them, remember that they are really very minor trace quantities only. Further, we should also note that these trace amounts were voluntarily accepted by them in order to be able to perform the deeds expected out of them. Because these trace admixing of other qualities was purely done on the basis of their free volition, one need not take such traces into account and all of them should be regarded as equivalent to one another. In fact the scriptures and epics hold that it is sinful to differentiate between them and anybody differentiating them would be ordained to hell.

"Sages, Munis (Great silent Saints), Siddhas belong to the group of *Rajas* within *Satva* within *Satva*. Vidhyadharas and Gandharvas addicted to enjoyment of life fall in the group of *Tamas* within *Satva* within *Satva*. According to this scheme of things, devils, spirits, ghosts, and poltergeists fall in the group within *tamas* with a bit of *rajas* within *tamas*.

"Suppose there is a group with *tamas* within *rajas* within *satva*. It is possible that hundreds of millions of things – sessile or vagrant creatures, animated beings or inert objects – may exist within that group. All of them in a group will not be Xerox copies. The relative proportions of *satva*, *rajas* and *tamas* keep changing in them.

Therefore, we should always keep in mind that right from '*F-FAPC*' that had its genesis in Pure *Satva* to the last stone in the world have originated through gradual modification in ignorance.

"Say a vortex formed in water. Water in the vortex will become turbulent. Waves emanate in the turbulence. Spume develops over the waves. There are bubbles in the spume. All of them appear distinct and different.

But if you look closely, what is present in all of them is nothing but water. In the same manner, what truly resides in *cidābhāsa śpūrti* (F- FAPC), nescience, the three qualities (*satva, rajas* and *tamas*), and all matter that is derived from them is nothing but Pure Existent Substance!

The Trinity of Gods (*brahma, viśnu, śiva*) is thus logically a part of ignorance. That is the reason why I grouped the three of them within nescience."

**Rama:** "What is the reason for this ignorance?"

**Vasishta:** "You think in terms of causes and effects because of your familiarity with the way of the world. You consider the Earth as the cause for the rocks and stones. But look, both are part of ignorance. Therefore, the very same nescience takes the form of cause at one place and effect at another. In the above example, the rock is ignorance as an effect. The earth is causal ignorance. Earth is ignorance as effect and its causal ignorance is water. Regressing thus to the original cause, we arrive at '*F-FAPC*.' At the time of Dissolution (*Pralaya*), all effects of nescience are dissolved and the causal nescience only remains. We cannot regress any further. It rebounds and creation starts. The causative ignorance becomes the effect and the cycle goes on."

**5. Knowledge is also Part of Ignorance**

**Rama:** "How does one go beyond the causal nescience in order to correctly observe things?"

**Vasishta:** "You need to acquire Knowledge to do so. Knowledge here refers to Knowledge of the Self. The root 'confusion' causal for *F-FAPC* will be extinguished by True Knowledge. When once ignorance is terminated, Pure Existence Consciousness Brahman will be the only thing that remains."

**Rama:** "No, along with Pure Existence Brahman, True Knowledge also should exist."

**Vasishta:** "Aha! You have to be very vigilant here. After all, Knowledge is also part of nescience. Therefore, even Knowledge is lost!"

**Rama:** "Sir, Your argument is indeed very strange! You say that two mutually contradictory things are part of one another. If Knowledge is a part of nescience, how can Knowledge terminate ignorance?"

**Vasishta:** "Say a wood log is set ablaze. Wood and fire cannot coexist. Because of the fire, the log is burnt. When the log is totally burnt down, what happens to the fire? You don't see the fire any more. A disease and its remedial medicine are opposed to one another. Medicine cures the disease. What happens to the medicine after the disease is cured? It is rejected and excreted. As far as that individual is concerned, we may say that the medicine lost its curative property.

"Similarly Knowledge burns down nescience gradually and finally it itself attenuates. See, for a person to be a murderer, there must be some victim who had to be murdered. If

there is none around, he can never be labeled a murderer.

What destroys nescience is by definition Knowledge. Therefore, what is residual after nescience is destroyed completely cannot be called Knowledge. The very name Knowledge ends along with ignorance."

**Rama:** "What remains then?"

**Vasishta:** "When the name 'pot' is lost, only clay remains. As the eddy clams down, only water remains. At the end of limited 'pot space' (*ghatākāsa*), only vast space (*mahākāsa*) remains. When a given name is lost, whatever it was before, that only remains. Now think over what would be the residual thing when both the names of 'Knowledge' and 'Nescience' are gone."

**Rama:** "Will it be Pure Existence Brahman?"

**Vasishta:** "Yes, that is correct. Only that's the One remnant."

**Rama:** "By admitting that only Brahman will remain at that stage, does it not amount to agreeing that Pure Existence Brahman and nescience would truly coexist at the time of creation?"

**Vasishta:** "Say we observed that a fig tree germinated from a fig seed. Now let us find out where the tree came from. After considerable deliberation, we arrive at the conclusion that the tree must have existed in an unmanifest form within the seed. Does it imply that the entire tree was sitting in a miniaturized form within the seed? Absolutely not. What we mean is that a potential form of the tree consisting of distinctly different parts that can be labeled as stem, branches, leaves, flowers, fruits etc. are hidden in the seed. Likewise, if what is seen in creation as *prakriti*, nescience and objects possessing diverse names and forms were to be a substance having True 'beingness', it cannot be that it would have not existed before creation. Because it is something that had no existence then and does not have existence now, we consider it to have had no existence then, though it is visible now. Hence we should train ourselves to understand that it does not exist though we may see it.

**अविद्येत्युच्यते लोके चिच्चेत्यमलमाश्रिता ।**
**चेत्यातीतात्मतामेति सर्वोपाधिविवर्जिता ।।**

*avidyetyuchyate loke chichchetyamalamaashritaa* |
*chetyaatiitaatmataameti sarvopaadhivivarjitaa* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa - Pūrvārdha, Sarga 10, Sloka 5

"As I have already stated, Pure Consciousness is '**चित्** *cit*'. "Percepts (**चेत्य** *cetya* )" are substances composed of the Five Elements and their derivatives superimposed on Pure Consciousness. Suppose it appears to us that Pure Consciousness and percepts are together. Which do you consider to have true existence? Only Pure Consciousness has true existence. "Because '**चेत्य** *cetya*' appears to have existence though it has none, it is also referred to as an impurity (**मलम्** *malam*). When Pure Consciousness occurs along with the taint named **चेत्य** *cetya*, we refer to Pure Consciousness as nescience. Suppose that the stain is removed and recognition dawns that different limiting forms (*upādhis*) do not exist. What would you call such a state? You would describe such a state as the one when Pure Consciousness transcended **चेत्य** *cetya*. What does 'transcending' refer to here? Strictly speaking only one substance (**चित्** *cit*) has a true existence.

There is no second substance that has 'existence'. The second substance has merely an appearance of having existence for a limited period of time. Such an appearance emerges because Pure Consciousness gets enveloped by a combination of mind, intellect and sense organs (which are all the effects of nescience).

"Like the threads which come out of a spider's mouth enclose the spider too, the effects of nescience enfold Pure Consciousness. Those threads disintegrate after a time. A similar thing had happened here too; but it is not that Pure Consciousness jumped out and crossed something. Even then, we usually describe this in the following terms: when once ignorance is gone, Pure Consciousness stays as Itself in untainted pristine form after transcending **चेत्य** *cetya*. We say so because individuals (*jīvās*) lack necessary discretion in their minds. Lacking discretion, they are unable to discriminate between Pure Consciousness (**चित्** *cit*) and Percepts (**चेत्य** *cetya*). Consequently we misapprehend that two separate things – True substance and nescience – exist in creation."

**6. Immobile Creatures and Yogis**

**Rama:** "If such is the condition of fully conscious human beings, what about the state of animals and the immobile living things? What is the state of their mind? What is their fate?"

**Vasishta:** "In order to comprehend the issues from a correct perspective, let us first consider human beings and non-moving living things like plants. If we compare the state of mind in human beings during deep sleep (**सुशुप्ति** *suśupti*) to a stone and in wakeful state to water, the state of mind of vegetation would be somewhere in-between. It is neither stone-solid nor watery. We may say it is like a viscous liquid. One cannot really analyze the pros and cons while being in such a muddy state. There is not much scope for the functioning of organs of action(*karmendriyās*). Only a nominal mind exists in them. Their consciousness exists merely as 'beingness.' Therefore, there is no possibility of salvation for such creatures."

**Rama:** "In case there are no actions done by the organs and the fluctuations of the mind also do not occur, Revered Teacher, the state of Plant Kingdom is comparable to well accomplished Yogis amongst men! They cannot even commit sins because they do not perform wrong actions or entertain sinful thoughts. So they are more proximal to attaining Liberation. How is it that you suggest in contradiction to this?"

**Vasishta:** "Rama! It is not correct to think in terms of proximity or remoteness to salvation. A distinction dependent on distance does not arise. Liberation and bondage are two sides of a coin. When bondage sublimates like camphor, what remains is Liberation. If most of the camphor is gone leaving a small speck and if that residual speck does not evaporate, you may say it is far removed from salvation.

"There is absolutely no possibility of nescience being completely removed from plants. A mind has to come into operation if that remaining speck of nescience has to be annulled. Sense organs and action organs have to function. Auditioning scriptural texts (**श्रवण** *śravaṇa*), reflecting on them (**मनन** *manana*) and meditating on them (**निदिध्यासन** *nididhyāsana*) are required. That is the only way how impressions (**वासना** *vāsanās*) from past deeds come to an end. Ending impressions is equivalent to letting go of the visible world after realizing it to be unreal.

If there is no intelligence at all and if an understanding of what are 'impressions' is absent, how can one get rid of them? Hence liberation cannot be obtained being in the

ignorant state that flora lives in.

"You say that no sin can be acquired by them as no action of the sense or action organs was possible for them. Let us accept that they do not have any sins now. But what about the effects of actions done in their past lives? Those effects lay latent in their mind.

A variety of plant seeds accumulate below ice blocks in the Himalayas. When the snow melts in summer, the seeds start germinating. The seeds of impressions latent within the minds of vegetation too act similarly. Therefore, plants are at no advantage by having not committed any sins now.

"Please remember this. Every human being has an opportunity to execute actions – both sinful and meritorious. But not many strive to perform meritorious deeds and eschew sinful acts. Within the few who seek truth, only a few would have been exposed to the Self-Knowledge and obtained an experiential understanding of Self. Even such a few have to repeatedly meditate and practice continuously to firm up their Self-Knowledge. This is the reason why I am again and again teaching the very same issues that we already discussed.

"An individual in whom Knowledge of Self is steadfastly established, he/she will have no binding to any of the actions performed by him/her with either sensory or action organs. Lord *viśnu* has many incarnations. On occasions, he had to go through the misery of having to be in a womb. Even then, He did not have any bondage nor was He affected by sorrow or happiness. The pairs of opposites do not touch Him. It is the same case with Lord *śiva* who enjoys romance as *arthanārīsvara* (God having half the body as male and the other half as female). Likewise *Brahma* spends a life of detachment studying *vedās* all the time. *jīvanmuktās* like *Brihaspati, Sukra, Narada, Suka*, belong to the same category. The firmness of their Self-Knowledge is unshakable. May you be blessed with such resolute stability!"

**Rama:** "Great Teacher! Please do narrate once again about the determination with which those noble individuals could achieve a state beyond misery and sorrow."

**Vasishta:** "Rama, I dealt with this topic in great detail from many different angles in the Chapter Upasama when I referred to The Song of Saints (*siddha gīta*) and also while describing the meditative practices of Sages Uddālaka, Samvarta and Vitahavya (Please refer to 'Yoga Vasishta - Book 5 – The Calm Down' of this Series). Essentially, there are two reasons for the inability of ordinary folk in comprehending that everything is *Brahman*. One is that they lack detachment. The other reason is the absence of unwavering determination that "I am not the body." A seeker who recognizes these two reasons should constantly remind himself that the visible world is no more than silver in nacre. He develops detachment in that way. As this feeling ripens, he will comprehend that he is not his body.

When this comprehension grows, he will be able to better understand subtler issues like consciousness (**चैतन्य** *caitanya*), supporting adjunct ( **उपाधि** *upādhi*) and Witness Consciousness ( **साक्षि** *sākṣi*) and related matters.

"Let us take an example. Human beings live on the earth. The Sun is up above in space. The eye sees the Sun. How is the eye able to see? An intrinsic consciousness (like limited space existing within a pot) existing in the person acts through his eye, reaches out to and envelops the Sun. Then he gets the experience (understanding), 'I see the Sun'."

[**Note:** We discussed these things in the Chapter on The Conduct of An Aspirant (*Mumukshu vyvahara Prakarana* under the Section: Working Process of the Sensory Organs. Please see

Book 2 of our Series.]

"Eye is the instrument (supporting body – **उपाधि** *upādhi)* for consciousness at our end on the earth. Up above in the sky the Sun is the supporting adjunct. What is the supporting structure for consciousness in between the eye and the sun? Because there is none, we have to admit that consciousness does not depend on anything in the intermediate space.

If this is understood clearly, two things firmly build up within a person: (i) a comprehension that consciousness exists independent of any support-structure even if at times it appears to be dependent on a structure and (ii) an understanding that "I am that Consciousness".

"With increasing comprehension of these things, your inquiry into the meaning of various words in the Great Vedic Statements intensifies. You will inquire in depth the significance of terms like 'That' and 'you' and their inter-relationship in sentences like "That thou art ( **तत्वमसि** *tat tvam asi*)." Because this inquiry reached its zenith, Janaka and others like him could become *jīvanmuktas*. *jīvanmukta* is one who has experientially reached a firm conclusion that the entire visible world including one's own body is no more than a virtual image (a false reflection) and not a True thing (**सत्य वस्तु** *satya vastu*) and the individual is nothing but Pure Consciousness which does not depend on any limiting adjunct, a body (**उपाधि** *upādhi*)."

[**Note:** Sage Vasishta covered the above discussion in two Sargas. The thirteenth Sarga opens with a question from Rama].

**7. Knowledge and Yoga**

**Rama:** "Gurudeva! While discussing the issue of achieving a stable understanding of Brahman, you mentioned in *Upasama Prakarana*, the 'Chapter: The Calm Down' that calming down the mind and eradication of impressions (**वासना क्शय** *vāsanā kśaya* ) were essential. You talked of two main practices in this context.

**द्वौ क्रमो चित्तनाशस्य योगो ज्ञानं च राघव ।**
**योगस्तद्वृत्तिरोधो हि ज्ञानं सम्यगवेक्षणम् ।।**

*dvau kramo cittanāśasya yogo jñānaṃ ca rāghava* |
*yogastadvṛttirodho hi jñānaṃ samyagavekṣaṇam* ||

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 78, Sloka 8

"You said that they were the *Yoga* and Knowledge Paths. You indicated that the Knowledge path is for people of superior eligibility and *Yoga* path was for people of intermediate eligibility. As far as I am concerned, I am peaceful in the state of a *jīvanmukta* having annihilated my impressions through the Knowledge path.

"Please enlighten me a bit on how one does attain such a peace through the control of the life- breath adopting the Yoga path. Also kindly tell me which method takes me to ever lasting peace."

(**Note:** Sage Vasishta unequivocally stated in the 92nd Sarga of Upasama Prakarana that both Yoga path and Knowledge path lead to the eradication of the mind.)

**वासनासंपरित्यागाच्चित्तं गच्छत्यचित्तताम् ।**
**प्राणस्पन्दनिरोधाच्च यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु ।।**

*vāsanāsaṃparityāgāccittaṃ gacchatyacittatām |*
*prāṇaspandanirodhācca yathecchasi tathā kuru ||*

Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 92, Sloka 20

Not only did he explain in detail about eradication of mind through annihilation of impressions and control of life-breath, he also said, "Do as you prefer!" Rama obtained the state of a Jivanmukta through the method of getting rid of impressions. But Sage Vasishta had been insisting that Rama should continue to hear the teaching. Therefore, Rama raised the question regarding the method to be preferred for attaining a stable and ever lasting state of peace.]

**Vasishta:** "Rama, as a matter of fact both methods are called '*Yoga*', because both can bring forth a unity of the individual and the Supreme Self. However, the path involving the control of life-breath is usually referred to as the Yoga method. Therefore, elders call one as the Path of Yoga and the other as the Path of Knowledge.

"Your question is about the relative merits of the methods. As a matter of fact, there is no difference between the two paths. Some find the *Yoga* path more convenient and some may find the Knowledge path more suitable. I find the Knowledge path to be more convenient for me.

"Knowledge path is better suited to one who can, with no bias and without prejudices, analyze things and stick to the conclusion arrived at logically. This path is relatively free from externally imposed restrictions. It may not be possible for some to be able to adhere to strict logic. Such people will find the *Yoga* path to be easier. The *Yoga* path stipulates many conditions. *Yoga* path has to be followed for a long time without interruptions. From this angle, this is somewhat more difficult between the two.

"But be forewarned of an important thing. Individuals pompously proclaiming to be following Knowledge path will not have an iota of benefit if they cannot hold on to the logically derived deduction that "I am not the body" and go about internally craving for worldly comforts. It is better for such persons to adopt the *Yoga* path. By doing so, any of their remnant hidden desires will be eliminated and they eventually realize Oneness with Self.

"I have been so far telling you mostly about the life-stories of persons who followed the Knowledge path. I did point out a couple of things about the *Yoga* path while narrating the stories of Uddālaka and Vitahavya. I underlined the importance of motiveless deep meditation for a midlevel seeker when I talked of Gādhi 's story. I brought out the importance of devotion when we discussed the life of Prahlada. But we have not so far discussed specifically any person's life story wherein he/she achieved liberation mainly through *Yoga* path. I was completely nonplussed when I came across an individual who achieved Realization following the *Yoga* path only. He was a crow named Bhusunda. Let me recount his story briefly here."

## 8. Story of Bhusunda

**Vasishta:** "Once I was at the court of Lord Indra. A discussion came up in the assembly about the longest living distinguished sages and who would truly excel. Sage Sātātapa made a mention of one Bhusunda, a Crow, in highly laudable terms in that connection. The sage said that Bhusunda was a very aged genuine Rishi, older than even Markandeya and others. He said that nobody could equal Bhusunda in Self-Knowledge. Bhusunda was said to be incomparable even in yogic achievements. He extolled very much about the admirable qualities of Bhusunda.

"However, I couldn't buy all that. How can a lowly crow metamorphose to a celebrated sage? How can he be so renowned? Why doesn't he attend any gatherings? If he has been living for so long, how is it that I never heard of his name? My doubts were interminable. We cannot just ignore what Sage Sātātapa said because he is not one to utter untruth. Therefore, I wanted to check it out by myself. I collected detailed directions to reach the residence of the Sage Crow and immediately embarked on a journey to meet him.

"There is a high peak full of valuable stones like rubies on the northeastern side of Mount Meru. There is a large mango tree on the peak. It is locally famous as the Boon giving tree. Its branches are several kilometers long. One of the branches towards the south has a big hollow of the size of a mountain cave. The great Crow Sage lives in that hollow.

"I had some difficulty in finding his place but finally reached there. When I looked around, I did not find anything special or significant. There were literally hundreds of varieties of birds living in nests on different branches. They were all chirping and were quite noisy. Surprised that a great sage lived amidst all that cacophony, I enquired about Sage Bhusunda from each of the birds I met. None of them had even a faint idea that a sage crow lived over there. Not a bird could lead me to the sage. Still, I did not give up. I continued my search.

"As I glanced around, for some reason, my attention was drawn to one of the rooks in that corvid group. He was shining like a sapphire in a heap of glass pieces. That raven too stared at me and spoke invitingly with respect thus: "Welcome Sage Vasishta, please come on in." I was amazed. The crows around were scared a bit and moved to the side. I could easily infer that the rook that invited me was Sage Bhusunda. I saluted him with due respect and went to him. He seated me affectionately on a large mango leaf. He offered me water and eatables in a ritualistic manner. I was totally stunned and sat there without a word. Sage Bhusunda himself began the conversation.

**Bhusunda:** 'Great Sage, Revered Vasishta! Meritorious deeds of all of us here are truly fructified today. You have been kind to give us all an audition by yourself taking pains to come all the way to our abode. We are indeed blessed by your kind visit.

First a question regarding the oldest living beings had arisen in the minds of eminent sages who transcended spacetime continuum and had understood the entire world to be no more than a play of nescience; next a sage referred my name during that debate; and then spurred by the allusion to me, you have been so kind to undertake this long trip to my humble place giving us the benefit of seeing you. What else can a convergence of so many events mean to be other than an awesome blessing for me? Mahatma! You have bestowed on us the opportunity of meeting you. Kindly bless this individual with your teachings too. Seldom does one get an opportunity to be able to listen to a truly exalted Guru like you.'

"Rama, I was astonished to hear those words. Bhusunda already knew the whole background to my visit. Still, what humility! What faith? I wondered within myself what I could teach such an individual. Haltingly I addressed him in the following words:

**Vasishta:** "Oh, King of Birds! What you said is true. I came here to meet your holiness. I could understand the moment I saw you that you were not trapped in this world of bondage. Even then I would like to ask you about your family background and social level (caste). How could you attain such a high level of Self-Knowledge? How could you achieve longevity? How old are you? Why are you staying in this remote place amidst a group of rooks though you have acquired so many divine powers? Please do tell me in detail.

**9. The Story of Earlier Period**

**Bhusunda:** 'Respected Sir! Your queries are a boon for us. It is only for cleansing our sins that you ask these questions of me. So I shall relate my story briefly.

'As you are well aware, Lord śiva, who is worshipped in all the worlds, has eleven Rudras as avatars (incarnations). Their retinue comprises eight Matrikas (mothers). Mother Alambusa was the seventh among them. Her vehicle was a crow called 'Chanda'. The eight mothers performed a ritual as per the Vama tradition in a graveyard in front of Rudra Tumbura. As part of the celebrations, they applied red sandalwood all over their bodies and danced around in a fully inebriated condition. Later the group started some discussions. A suggestion came up in those talks that Goddess Uma, wife of the First Rudra Esana should be taught a lesson as she was bossing over all others. In their drunken state, they lost all sense of discretion. They joined together their eight forces. They attacked Goddess Uma, beat her and dragged her to where they were. With uncontrolled raze, they changed her into a variety of sumptuous culinary dishes using their chanting powers. They ate up all the dishes, consumed more liquor and danced more.

'Attracted by the sounds of dance and music, lady Swans who were Goddess Saraswati's vehicles came there. They enjoyed the dance. As the mothers had been dancing for a long time, Crow Chanda, the vehicle of Alambusa, also consumed some liquor, ate the special dishes and started prancing around. Seeing the group, Goddess Saraswati's vehicles, Swans were also tempted to join in. So they also got drunk, partook of the food and danced. While the mothers were dancing as per the practices of the ritual, the swans were dancing without knowing anything. They mixed and closely strutted with the Crow Chanda, forgetful of their higher social class and status. Eventually the Swans became pregnant.

'By dawn, the Mothers completed their dance ritual and went to the Chief Rudra, Esana. They offered him the tasty cuisine brought by them. Rudra Esana was furious to see the offering as he could immediately recognize the cruel orgy committed by them. The eight mothers were dead scared of his anger. They cut pieces of flesh out of their bodies, offered them to fire in an altar and recreated Goddess Uma. They presented her to Rudra Esana, celebrated their marriage and somehow managed to please them both. Then they left for their places after bidding good-bye. As the Mothers had occult powers, they could rectify their mistake. The Swans, however, did not know how to make amends for their wrongdoing. The Swans were desolate and gloomy. They approached Goddess Saraswati with a sense of shame written all over their faces. Mother Goddess was incensed by their behavior. She chided them in strong words. She regretted that the Swans stooped down to such a low level though they were associated with her for a long time and had even learnt the rare capacity to discerningly separate water and milk**.** She dismissed them from her service and threw them

out of her abode. She asked them to find their own means of living.

'The Swans became rudderless. They were ashamed to continue in Brahma Loka. They went to Vishnu Loka. They hid in the pond of Vishnu's navel. Each of the seven Swans gave birth to a triplet of crows in course of time. I am the eldest of the 21 crows thus born. After we grew up, we discussed the matter with our mothers. We encouraged them to return to Brahma Loka from hiding. On coming back to Brahma Loka, all of us worshipped Goddess Saraswati in several ways. We sought her mercy. Goddess Saraswati was very compassionate. She reappointed our mothers in their jobs and was kind to impart Knowledge of Self to us. After receiving the blessings of Goddess Saraswati thus, we desired to meet our father. So we went to Goddess Alambusa's country in the Vindhyan Mountains.

We met our father there. He received us well. Though he belonged to the class of ravens, he attained highest levels of Self-Knowledge due to the kindness of Goddess Alambusa. He was very pleased with the spiritual practices we carried out with whatever little knowledge we got from Goddess Saraswati. He summoned us one day and said to us :

'Sons! I can see that you got good knowledge from Goddess Saraswati. That is quite appreciable as far as it goes. But the real question is whether you attained experiential Self-Knowledge or not. There is no use of any knowledge, if you have not obtained Self-Knowledge. Because she was your first Teacher, it is better you go back to her. She will readily respond if you pray to her. She is very kind-hearted. She will impart thorough Self-Knowledge.'

We were initially a little apprehensive about our father's reaction if we let him know that we were Goddess Saraswati's disciples because he was a follower of Goddess Alambusa. So we felt very happy on hearing his words. We addressed him thus:

'Father, by the kindness of Goddess Saraswati, we could learn what was possible to be learnt. Worldly things do not tempt our senses. Nor do we have any desires in this world. We would like to spend our time in solitude. Because it is our bounden duty to serve our parents who gave us this body, we stayed back here. We wish to spend our time meditating on Self if you permit us. We request you to indicate a suitable place to us for this purpose.'

'Our father was overjoyed listening to us speak thus. He hugged us. He caressed us. He gave us pieces of meat which he stored as a valuable possession as he received it from Goddess Alambusa as a special gift. He added:

'My dear Children! If you are really looking for a place of solitude, fly away to the end of Mount Meru. (Mount Meru refers to the backbone). After you travel for a long time, you will reach a peak of 16,000 sq. *krosas* (approximately equal to 64,000 sq. miles). If you cross that, you will find another peak full of rubies. There is a large Wish fulfilling tree towards the northeast of that peak. In fact the Wish fulfilling tree is so huge it appears as a reflection of the whole universe!

I lived in a nest in the hollow of a branch towards the south of the tree. The nest is still there safe and secure. If you desire to have a truly lonely place, you better go there. You will not have any disturbance either from gods or humans at that place. You will find the place quite convenient. If you agree to this, please proceed there.'

[**Note:** The number 16,000 indicates the sixteen petalled *viśuddha chakra* (corresponds to the location of Pharyngeal plexus). Gems stones rubies stand for the lotus petal like eyes. Northeast represents the *ājna chakra* whose lord is *īśvar*. *ājna chakra* corresponds to Cavernous plexus and Wish fulfilling tree refers to *sahasrāra chakra* corresponding to Pineal

plexus. A branch towards the south implies the Knowledge path.]

"We felt very happy at these words of our father. We took leave of him and returned to our mothers. We met Goddess Saraswati and told her about these developments. She too permitted us to go and blessed us. We finally took permission from our mothers and came to this place. We have been staying here ever since.

'Great Sage! I have to tell you one thing though. What I narrated does not pertain to this *Kalpa* (period). It happened in one of the long past *Kalpās*. That *Kalpa* was gone. So did that peak and the original Wish fulfilling tree. In the course of many time cycles similar mountain peaks and trees originated. I will continue to stay here.

I talked as if the original tree and this one right here now are one and the same. Please do not misunderstand me. I am not lying. It is certainly my fortune that after so many *Kalpās* a great individual like you takes the trouble of trekking down to this place to visit me. Please accept this water. Kindly receive these offerings. Please bless us!'

**Vasishta:** "Rama, I was astonished that such a noble person, an adept in Self-Knowledge and Meditation should offer me water and food a second time with so much humility. I enquired from him why I did not find any of his brothers around. Our conversation went on like this after my question."

**Bhusunda:** 'Maharshi! You are well aware of everything. The longevity of any being is governed by the suffering he had to go through in the current life (*prārabdha*). Each of my brothers attained liberation without body (*videha mukti*) after death one after another as per their *prārabdha* (current suffrage). Is there anything that Time cannot consume in this world?'

**Vasishta:** 'Maharshi Bhusunda! You are a realized individual. You are quite aged and highly experienced. Why are you still living here? There is no water or other resources to live here. Because of the height of the mountain, it is so hot like a dozen suns shining at once. Even stones break during the day because of the heat. The nights are so chilly that one is frozen in no time. What have you located yourself permanently in such a godforsaken place?'

**Bhusunda:** 'Great Sage! Who can counter fate ? We are destined to be born in a low social stratum, to fly in space, to move in forests, and reside on trees. What different life can be expected for such creatures? But it does not bother me because I am always in a state of permanent bliss. You talk of hot daytime and cold nights. I am an old creature. I do not see any difference between day and night. I count the time based on the number of times my breath moves from *mūlādhāra cakra* (corresponding to Coccygeal plexus) to *ājna chakra* (corresponding to Cavernous plexus). This method is known as "*ajapā japa*." Any man will have 21,600 respiratory cycles (inhalation and exhalation) in a day distributed as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *mūlādhāra cakra* | Corresponding to Coccygeal plexus | 600 |
| *swādhistāna cakra* | Prostatic | 6,000 |
| *Manipūra cakra* | Solar | 6,000 |
| *Anāhata cakra* | Cardiac | 6,000 |
| *Viśuddha cakra* | Pharyngeal | 1,000 |
| *Ājna cakra* | Cavernous | 1,000 |
| *Sahasrāra cakra* | Pineal | 1,000 |

‘The method of *ajapā japa* consists of remembering the counts of breaths, and being able to see Oneness between Self on one hand and the seed letters (*bīja askhśarās* like *vam, sam, śam* etc.) pertaining to each of the chakras and the governing lords of the *chakras* (like Ganesha and other gods) on the other hand. The essence of Time will be self-evident for *Yogis* who practice the method very carefully without a fault after learning it from Gurus who are knowledgeable of the secrets. Therefore, such *Yogis* need not have to depend on the sun and moon to measure time as clearly expressed in texts on *Yoga*.

‘Coming to the question of comfort. Through proper inquiry, my intellect (*buddhi*) has achieved discretionary capacity to discern what is essential and what is inessential in the world. Hence happiness or sorrow does not affect me like they do ordinary crows.

It does not mean that I have left the world. Nor does it mean that I hang on to it. I do not succumb to pairs of opposites like love and hatred though I perform worldly functions to the extent required to carry on with my life because of the kind blessings of elders like you. Now that I am fortunate to have your direct audition, I consider that all my sins are totally annihilated; my life’s aim is fulfilled.

‘You ask me why I made this place my permanent residence. I am a very old hag. I cannot keep changing my nests frequently. I do not have the strength. This tree is relatively stable. Once upon a time, Hiranayaksha rolled the earth as if it was a mat. This tree was steady at that time too. At another time, Lord Vishnu held Mount Meru with his two upper hands and pulled out Mount Mandhara with his two lower hands. He placed the mountains on the Great Tortoise for churning the Milky Ocean (*kśira samudram*). The ocean was stirred up. Then too this tree remained firm. *Rudra Sankarshana* once assumed the form of *ādi seśa* (The serpent on which Lord Vishnu rests). He tried to shoulder the weight of the earth. Unable to do so, he emitted violent poisonous gases burning away the three worlds. Even then this tree did not budge

‘That is the reason why I continue to reside in the old nest on a branch of this tree.’

**10. Events in a Great Dissolution**

**Vasishta:** ‘Oh Great One! You are hinting at some deeper thing though apparently telling interesting Grand Mother Stories. The events you recounted match approximately with Dissolutions (*pralaya*) that occur at the culmination of each *Kalpa* when the daytime of Brahma ends. Did you come across a time when Brahma's life itself concluded and a Great Dissolution (*Brahma pralaya*) took place? What happened to this tree then and what happened to you when the tree itself was not there?’

**Bhusunda:** ‘Great Sage! You know everything. Under such Great Dissolutions, this tree cannot exist at all.

**आकाश एव तिष्ठामि विगताखिलकल्पनः ।**
**स्तब्धप्रकृतिसर्वाङ्गो मनो निर्वासनं यथा ।।**

*ākāśa eva tiṣṭhāmi vigatākhilakalpanaḥ |*
*stabdhaprakṛtisarvāṅgo mano nirvāsanaṃ yathā ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvardha, Sarga 21, Sloka 16

‘Space becomes my substratum under those circumstances. All thoughts in my mind totally disappear. My organs freeze. I attain a form similar to that of a mind free of impressions (*vāsanās*).

‘At the time of such Great Dissolutions, no star can stay around. Every sun disintegrates. I continue with a firm resolve in my mind, “I am myself God Varuna (*vāruneem dhāranām badhvā*).” When the mighty winds of Dissolution blow, I remain stable with the conviction, “I am Mountain (*parvateem dhāranām badhvā)*.” When the entire world gets completely flooded and looks like a single sheet of water, I float in space with a certainty, “I am wind (*vayaveem dhāranām badhvā*).” With the essences of the five fundamental elements evaporating:

**सुषुप्तावस्थया तावत्तिष्ठाम्यचलरूपया ।।**

*suṣuptāvasthayā tāvattiṣṭhāmyacalarūpayā* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvardha, Sarga 21, Sloka 20

‘I remain steadfast in a state of one essence (*eka rasi bhūta*) in thoughtless deep meditation (*nirvikalpa samādhi*) in the final stage of Bhuma. (The Supreme Consciousness is referred to as Bhuma in the seventh chapter of *Chandogya Upanishad*).

‘After some period, a new *Brahma* will originate and the next cycle of creation commences. A similar tree germinates here. Because of the pending current suffrage (*prārabdha*), I wake up from my deep meditation. My mind and organs resume their functions. I reestablished myself on this tree. This has repeated many times over by now.’

**Vasishta:** ‘Bhusunda! Your persistence (*dhāraṇa yoga*) is commendable! By the strength of the *dhāraṇa yoga*, you have been able to survive many *brahma kalpās* and live forever. Why is it that other *yogis* don’t do the same ?’

**Bhusunda:** ‘Revered Sage, one cannot compare one yogi with another in their yogic accomplishments. Each goes according to his fate. That is the inexorable Law of Nature. The inexorable Law (*niyati*) is the will of the Supreme Self. My thoughts derive their strength from the will of the Supreme Self. Because of the strength of the will of the Supreme, this tree takes root on the hills though *Brahmas* may keep changing. That is the way natural law works for me.’

**Vasishta:** ‘You witnessed many Great Dissolutions. What has astonished you the most?’

**Bhusunda:** ‘Oh Best of Brahmins! How can I name one? There are several.

1. I saw the earth being totally submerged under the sea with no living being in existence other than the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara.
2. I saw the earth covered by stones and rubble without anything for about four and a quarter yugas. Forget any individual creatures, not even grass was there.
3. I saw the earth covered by a cloud of something like ashes for 11,000

years.

4. I also witnessed rings of bright light circling round the earth before they condensed as the sun and moon.
5. I was also a witness to the fact that the earth was occupied only by demons for a period of four yugas.
6. The demons occupied the space above the earth and because of this it was total darkness on the earth.
7. For another 10,000 years the bones of those demons covered the earth.
8. For a period of two yugas earth was full of forests without any other living things.
9. I had seen countless great and noble men.
10. Their descendents gradually desecrated dharma by the time Kali Yuga arrived and lived in pitiable conditions. This happened many times.
11. I witnessed people being given birth to asexually merely by thought during some creations.
12. I noticed differences in the creation of different *Brahmas*. I also saw differences from kalpa to kalpa in the creation of even the same *Brahma*. For example earth was not there in the creation of one *Brahma*. In another, there was no light. Yet in another creation earth was without any mountains. Thus there were many varieties.
13. There were many incidents common to all *kalpas*. Some of the examples are: occupation of the earth by Hiranyaksha, Lord *viśnu* incarnating as different avatars, churning the ocean, flight of Garutman to Heaven and so on that happened during the life times of much younger people like you and others.
14. Once Lord *viśnu* functioned as *Brahma* too. I saw *Brahma* operating as *Rudra* and dissolving the world. *Rudra* mounted Garutman (vehicle of *viśnu*) and supervised creation yet another time.
15. *Brahmarshi !* I know eight of your past births. In the present birth, you are the son of Brahma. In your past births, you were born once from space, once from water and another time from wind, rock and even fire. I saw you taking birth from the five elements (*pancha bhūtas*). You had a different appearance in each of your births with some resemblances and some differences. I remember all these.
16. Not only with respect to you but with respect to other gods too I saw them go through several births. I witnessed the earth being rescued five times by a tortoise and not by a pig.
17. Some of the *kalpas* missed the Parasuram avatar (incarnation).
18. I saw the incarnation of Buddha a hundred times in Kaliyugas.
19. I was witness nine times to Indras being dethroned and confined to mountain caves because of their wrong doings.
20. I saw eight times Hari and Hara fight each other, nominally keeping the Demon Bana as a pretext, in order to vanquish the two fevers known by the names of Ishwar fevers and *viśnu* fevers.
21. I know that Sage Vyasa writes the Puranas at the end of each Dwapara yuga.
22. Sage Valmiki is going to script The Great Ramayana with 32,000 verses in this *Kalpa*. I am able to see it with clairvoyance. He authored it eleven times earlier. (Great Ramayana is the same as Yoga Vasishta).

23. I am unable to recall clearly whether it was Vyasa or Valmiki who wrote Mahabharata in some of the *kalpas*.
24. If we look at the creations with a critical eye, we feel that creation is like bubbles on waves in an ocean. We can neither say that all the bubbles are the same nor can we say that they are different.
25. But I said that this Wish fulfilling tree remained unaffected in all the *Kalpas*. That is not strictly very true. One tree goes and another comes in its place just like a new bubble coming in the place of one that had popped. Because both trees are alike, I am describing this tree as the same one.
26. The condition of my body is also the same. By the strength of my *Yoga*, I am able to keep it without change in each *Kalpa*.
27. Sage Vasishta! I can go on describing many more things. I saw the creation of not only *Brahma* but that of *Aindava Brahmas*.
    [**Note:** Sage Vasishta described the creation done by the *Aindava Brahmas* in the Chapter on Creation (Book 3 of our Series). He also said in the 47th Sarga of Chapter on Sustenance (Book 4 of our Series) that there were many Hiranyagarbhas.]
28. In fact if we ask what is it that remains unchanged, it is Me only!'

**11. I am Untouched by Death**

**Vasishta:** 'Bhusunda! You are narrating so many things. That means you are a party to this creation and hence you are involved with the worldly dealings. How can there be no death to one who is occupied like that?

**कथं विहगराजेन्द्र देहं मृत्युर्न बाधते ।।**

*kathaṃ vihagarājendra dehaṃ mṛtyurna bādhate* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvardha, Sarga 23, Sloka 2

**Bhusunda:** 'Sir, You people are the masters. We are servants. It is fun for the masters to provoke their servants to speak! Hence, I shall answer your query.

**दोषमुक्ताफलप्रोता वासनातन्तुसंततिः ।**
**हृदि न ग्रथिता यस्य मृत्युस्तं न जिघांसति ।।**

*doṣamuktāphalaprotā vāsanātantusaṃtatiḥ* |
*hṛdi na grathitā yasya mṛtyustaṃ na jighāṃsati* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvardha, Sarga 2, Sloka 5

'The impressions from repeated births are the threads. Desires, evils like anger etc. are the beads of pearls. If one does not take this pearl necklace close to his heart, death cannot touch him. Death does not touch an individual who is not chiseled down by deep regretful sighs emanating from a mind incubated in worries. Death will not come to one who is not tormented by the poisonous pangs of desire. Death will not approach one who is free of attachments, longing etc.'

(Note: **भुतन्तःकरण प्राण ज्ञान कर्मेन्देरियैर्युतं**
**अविद्या काम कर्माध्यां लिङ्गं पुवष्टकं विदुः**

*bhutantaḥkaraṇa prāṇa jñāna karmenderiyairyutaṃ*
*avidyā kāma karmādhyāṃ liṅgaṃ puvaṣṭakaṃ viduḥ*

Sage Valmiki penned at this point eight verses ending with the phrase '**मृत्युस्तं न जिघांसति**' "*mrityustam na jighāmsati*" as a tagline. Questions on 'life and death' came up in the 39th Sarga of the Chapter: Upasama Prakarana (The Calm Down) during the discussion of Prahlada's life story. The argument here assumes a slightly different color. Which malefic qualities are to be avoided and how to focus our mind in getting rid of the malefic effects in order to conquer death are elaborated here. We dealt with the first part so far. The second part has '**चित्तं यस्य समाहितम्**' "*cittam yasya samāhitam* (whose mind is one-pointed)" as the refrain and is being expounded now.]

**Bhusunda:** 'Great Sage, these defects will not operate if the mind is steady and focused. Focused mind is one that is in deep meditation (*samādhi*). Carrying out any number of deeds with a stable mind does not give authorship (doership) to the actor and therefore, he will not be the experiencer of the effect of his actions.

'If the mind has to be steady, individuation (separateness) should not exist. If the sense of separation has to cease, your mind should be inclined towards Knowledge. Knowledge can only come with detachment towards comforts in this and the world beyond. You have to discover the everlasting 'Thing' and abide the mind in It for good. Self inquiry is the only means to achieve that. You may ask me how I could possibly achieve that when it is so difficult even for persons like you who are knowledgeable of the *Vedas*. Let me explain my technique.

'It is true that Self inquiry is easier said than done. There are a few aids for doing it. Following the aids, you may get a convenient handle on it. I adopted the technique of 'thinking on life-breath' and succeeded.'

**12. Ritualistic Vow on Meditation of Prāna**

**Vasishta:** 'Bhusunda, You are talking very interestingly. Please explain the technique of 'Thinking on Life-breath'.

**Bhusunda:** 'Great Muni! You know it very well. Even then, I shall tell you as you are asking me. 'Observe your body carefully. Does it not look like a building? The load bearing pillars of the structure are *vāta*, pitta* and kapha**. Bones are the bricks inside. Eyes are the windows. The main entrance for the building is the mouth. The light inside the house comes from the luminescence of the inner individual (*jīvātma*). The householder who lives in it is I-consciousness. His relatives are eight in number. They are: (i) the five elements (*bhūtas*), (ii) the five sensory organs, (iii) the five action organs, (iv) the quartet of mind-memory-intellect-I-consciousness (*antahkarana chatustayam*), (v) ignorance, (vi) desire, (vii) action and (viii) the five Pranas. (The cluster of these eight together is also referred to as "The Composite of Eight Cities" (*puryaśtaka*)'

[Note: * -- *Vāta, Pitta and kapha* represent forces in the human body. *Vāta* is Biophysical force causing Nervous, Psychic and Catabolic phenomena. *Pitta* is Biochemical force

causing Enzymatic, thermal and metabolic phenomena. *kapha* is Biochemical and Physical force causing Anabolic and Nutritive phenomena.]

'On either side of the house are two small ante-rooms called *ida* and *pingala*. These ante- rooms are too small to be visible. These two tube like-rooms are attached to a complex machine (*yantra*) that is at the center of the house. Though the complex appears very delicate, it works very fast. It has soft bones and muscles within it. The collection of muscles gives it the appearance of a bunch of floral buds – as if six lotus buds are attached together. It is known as Heart. Another name for it is **पुरीतत्** *purītat* .'

'Seventy two fine nerves spread out of the heart in all directions, as though several leaves surround the bunch of buds. Moon is the lord of the *ida* nerve. Sun is the lord of *pingala* nerve. When the winds of *prāna and apāna* enter the *ida* nerve, juice of lunar nectar (*chandra amrita rasa*) from *ida* sprinkles on the leaves around the heart machine. The leaves expand a little on coming in contact with the nectar.

When the winds move through *pingala*, the leaves shrink a bit from the heat of the solar fire present in *pingala*. Because of the constant expansion and contraction, a lasting vibration takes place in the leaves, which are full of nerves. With every breath of man, nerves around the heart vibrate increasingly and more wind of life-principle develops at this place. Because it is a form of energy, it spreads into all the subtle nerves and travels to all parts of the body.

'When the energy reaches the heart, it is known as 'life-breath' (*prāna*). When it reaches the anus, it is called as '*apāna* wind.' When it is at the navel, it is called as '*samāna* wind.' At the throat it is called '*udāna* wind'. When it is spread freely to all the 72,000 nerves, it is known as '*vyāna* wind'. There is life within the food consumed by man. The energy drawn from the digested food is absorbed by the energy existing within the nerves and carried to the entire body. In other words, the energy from the food we consume regularly refuels the energy of the nerves and is distributed to the entire body.

'The nerves that carry the life-principle are connected to the centers of all the organs. Therefore, life-principle flows to all those organs, provides sentience (*chaitanya*) to them, and motivates them for work. Therefore, heart is the paramount organ in our body. Life-principle occupies a primary position amongst action organs. We may even say that it is the life-principle that works as different organs. Just as the strings tied to puppets makes them move, life-principle is the string that moves the organs. Therefore, life-principle is also called '*sūtrātma*' (String).

'Though it is the same life-principle that is spread all over the body, it is termed life-wind when it moves upwards. When it moves downwards, it is referred to as '*apāna* wind. These are the two primary winds. I keep track of their movement all the time. *Prāna and apāna are the ādhyātmika* forms of life (i.e. related to body). Wind is the *ādibhoutika* form (i.e. related to the five fundamental elements). Its quality as '*sutrātma' is ādhidaivika* form. Great Sage! I concentrate my mind always on the '*sutrātma*' form of life-breath. This is the vow of life-force ritual (*prāna vāyu vrata*). Ordinary folk follow the vow of the ritual of organs (*indriya vrata*). Each of the sensory and action organs possesses a rotten habit. Because of the rotten habit, they fall into the trap of sins. Therefore, they become tired frequently by expending energy. Tiresomeness is nothing but death. They keep dying and are reborn. Identifying oneself with the organs, thinking that one is no more than the organs and enjoying the worldly comforts, suffering sorrow that comes in the form of effort and dying and taking rebirth with them is the vow of the ritual of organs (*indriya vrata*).

‘Under the power of the vow of the life-force ritual, I could drop completely the ritual of organs. I mentioned already that life-force was the true organ. Hence you may expect the presence of ‘life and death cycles’ in the life-force ritual too. But life-force as an organ does not have any flawed habits. As a matter of fact, worldly objects do not affect it ! Completely detached and totally desireless, it keeps moving in the vessels of the mouth and nose etc. Hence no sin touches it. There is no effort involved. And hence there is no death. The life-force ritual is never interrupted even for a second. Because I have been practicing the ‘*sūtrātma*’ form of life-force ritual, I do not have mortality. What I described thus far comprises the ritual of meditation on life-force.

‘Great Sage! Observance of life-force ritual is very unique. Between *prāna* and *apāna*, *prāna* is cooler and *apāna* a bit warmer. These two workhorses have been running this machine called body for eons. Other organs differ in their actions depending on the three states of wakefulness, deep sleep and dreams. *prāna* and *apāna* behave the same way in all the three states. However, it is difficult to keep track of them because they move very subtly.

**यथा केशस्सहस्रधा भिन्नह् ता वतानिम्न तिश्तति**

*yathā keśassahasradhā bhinnah tā vatānimna tiśtati*

‘Thus say the Vedas. *Prāna and apāna* are as fine as a strand you get by splitting a single hair into thousand parts. Therefore, it is not possible to grasp *prāna and apāna* until and unless you concentrate the mind.

**अविरतगतयोर्गतिं विदित्वा हृदि मरुतोरनुसृत्य चोदितां ताम् ।**
**न पुनरिह हि जायते महात्मन्मुदितमनाः पुरुषः प्रणष्टपाशः ।।**

*aviratagatayorgatiṃ viditvā hṛdi marutoranusṛtya coditāṃ tām |*
*na punariha hi jāyate mahātmanmuditamanāḥ puruṣaḥ praṇaṣṭapāśaḥ ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvardha, Sarga 24, Sloka 38

‘Oh Great One, I follow assiduously the never-ending movement of *prāna and apāna* in the heart and other organs. Our scriptures praise highly the life-force ritual describing it to be flawless, effortless and indestructible among practices of control of life-breath. One who knows this and practices the life-force ritual will be blissful in mind. His fretters will be broken. He will have no rebirth. I am in that state.’

[**Note:** We may notice that the details discussed in the 24th Sarga are based on the mantras from Brihadarnyakopanishad :

**अथातो व्रतमीमाꣳसा ’**
**तस्मादेकमेव व्रतं चरेत् प्राण्याच्चैवापान्याच्च नेन्मा**
**पाप्मा मृत्युराप्नवदिति । यद्यु चरेत् समापिपयिषेत् तेनो एतस्यै**
**देवतायै सायुज्यꣳ सलोकतां जयति ॥**

*‘athāto vratamīmāꣳsā’*
*tasmādekameva vrataṃ caret prāṇyāccaivāpānyācca nenmā*
*pāpmā mṛtyurāpnavaditi | yadyu caret samāpipayiṣet teno etasyai*
*devatāyai sāyujyaꣳ salokatāṃ jayati ||*

Brihadarnyakopanishad, 1.v. 21, 23

**Vasishta:** 'Bhusunda, you said, **अविरतगतयोर्गतिं विदित्वा** *aviratagatayorgatiṃ viditvā* (having known the movement of *prāna and apāna*). Will you please describe the nature of that movement?'

**13. Definition of prāna and apāna**

[**Note:** A few people with some nodding acquaintance with modern science consider oxygen contained in the air around us as life-giving. We inhale oxygen rich air and exhale carbon dioxide rich air through our nostrils. They designate the inhaled air as life-breath (*prāna* wind) and the exhaled air as *apāna* wind. According to Ayurveda (ancient Indian herbal medicine):

**ह्रुदि प्रानो गुदे अपान समानो नाभि सम्स्थिताह्**

*hrudi prāno gude apāna samāno nābhi samsthitāh*

What goes up from the heart is *prāna* wind. What goes down from rectum is the *apāna* wind. The wind that stays at the navel and keeps these two separate is '*samāna*' wind. These connotations are not valid here. As per the Yoga texts and the terminology being followed here by Sage Valmiki, *prāna* stands for life-force, sentient living energy. The principal place for it is the heart in the body. The air in the atmosphere surrounding us is insentient and inert. Hence it is *apāna* . *apāna* is derived from *apa* + *anam* meaning that which lacks sentience. The air goes through our nostrils and reaches the heart. The air mixes there with life-force and gets converted to life-breath from its contact. What comes out of our nose is that life-breath.

Our bodies get stressed when the sentient exhaled breath comes out. We can understand this if we hold the breath for sometime. The exhaled air will be slightly warmer. That is why it is referred to in the yogic texts as related to sun or fire. It flows outwards from the heart like a flare. We feel a bit of comfort when we take in the *apāna* wind from outside.

We get a pleasant experience. We feel it is cool. In the language of Yoga, the *apāna* wind is related to the moon or water. Like raindrops falling into a well, *apāna* travels down to heart. Sage Valmiki adopted the terminology as spelt out above in this chapter. Bhagavad-Gita too follows the same connotation, as in:

**अपाने जुह्वति प्राणं प्राणेऽपानं तथापरे ।**
**प्राणापानगती रुद्ध्वा प्राणायामपरायणाः ॥**

*apāne juhvati prāṇaṃ prāṇe'pānaṃ tathāpare |*
*prāṇāpānagatī ruddhvā prāṇāyāmaparāyaṇāḥ ||*

Bhagavadgita, Chapter 4, Sloka 29

'Some people sacrifice the *prāna* in the *apāna* at the altar. Some do the reverse way. Yet others take interest in breath control inhibiting the movement of *prāna* and *apāna*.'

Unless we keep at the back of our mind the definition of *prāna* and *apāna* as per the usage by Sage Valmiki, we cannot make any sense of this chapter. Sage Valmiki explained

this at the end of the chapter. We brought it up right here for the convenience of the reader. Now we shall continue with our main story.]

**14. Ritualistic Vow on Life-force**

**Bhusunda:** 'Sage Vasishta, you are quite aware of these things. By whatever name we may call, life-force, or movement of life or path of life, it means about the same. Phrases like movement of life and path of life have their origin in grammar and their meaning can be understood better if their grammatical derivation is known. Wind has an alternate name, '*sadā gati*' (ever on the move). This name is given because of its nature of constant movement. Life-force too is always on the move. The word *prāna gati* clearly indicates this. Therefore, this name is a derivative. It resides in the body in the region of heart above the navel. *apāna* wind is also vibratory. It resides in the body below the navel. Outside the body it exists below the nose.

'Restraining *prāna* and *apāna*, a person has to control his life-breath. One should become an expert in this practice to the extent that the breath control should take place automatically not only while awake but also while in sleep. I will elucidate the method of achieving this. Please listen.

"Exhalation of air from the heart is usually termed '*rechaka*' and inhalation as '*pūraka*'. The part of '*recaka*' from the heart to '*mūrdhva sthana*' (placed at the top inside the head) is called '*āntara recaka*'. The part from there till the end of nostrils is named '*bāhya recaka*'. The corresponding two parts of inhalation are: *āntara pūraka* and '*bāhya pūraka*'. Thus the stretch of breath from the 12 *inch* point below the nose to the beginning of the nostrils is the '*bāhya pūraka*'. The stretch of breath from the beginning of the nostrils to the heart is *āntara pūraka*.'

[**Note on *inches**:** An *inch* here does not refer to one twelfth of a foot. An *inch* is defined here as the length of the first digit of a person's thumb. A point 12 *inches* below the tip of the nose is referred to as the Point of Origin for *apāna* wind in the yoga books. A person is believed to be able to draw air during inhalation usually from a distance of 12 *inches* (as measured with the length of his/her own first digit of thumb).]

"*Kumbhaka is* the state during the period between stoppage of the movement of *apāna* wind in the heart and resumption of movement.

Hence the practice of breath control has three parts in it: '*recaka*', *kumbhaka* and '*pūraka*'. These three states are defined based on the heart space. One may also define the three states based on the Point of Origin of *apāna* outside the nose. Based on this, *kumbhaka* is defined as: the exhaled breath goes up to the Point of origin 12 *inches* away from the nose and comes to rest. The state before it picks up the speed of movement again is *kumbhaka*. More specifically it is called as'*bāhya kumbhaka*'. Similarly, '*āantara pūraka*' in this classification is the part of the exhaled air from the heart till the end of the nose. From the tip of the nose till the Point of origin is '*bāhya pūraka'. bāhya recaka* is the part from the Point of origin to the tip of the nose. The part from nose to the heart is *āntara recaka*.

'Thus there are in total ten parts in the practice of breath control. These are -

based on heart space:

*āntara recaka*
*bāhya recaka*

*bāhya pūraka*
*āntara pūraka*

based on the Point of Origin:
*āntara pūraka*
*bāhya pūraka*
*bāhya recaka*
*āntara recaka*

Plus two *kumbhakas.*

'Excluding the two *kumbhakas* which together constitute the main form of breath control, there are eight parts. Elders, therefore, say that breath control has eight components. These eight components function without any special effort in every living creature as long as the creature is alive. The more attention one pays to the working of the eight components, the more one contemplates on them. By virtue of this contemplation, the ability to control the movement of *prāna and apāna* develops. Slowly, one will be able to increase the duration of *kumbhaka*. As a result, the mind gets purified. This leads to a reduction of the feeling of "I am the doer, I am the enjoyer." Over time, one loses interest in worldly things and finally attains liberation.

'Thus, Oh Great Sage, breath control is the means of achieving *nirvāṇa* for one who understands and restrains the movement of breathing.

'The lord of *prāna* is the sun. The lord of *apāna* is moon. Whether the sun absorbs the moon or the moon absorbs the sun, the seeker will be free of worldly misery. Please remember that we invented the names *prāna* and *apāna* and sun and moon. When we speak of the moon absorbing sun, it merely implies that the life-force merges with *apāna* wind. This is *bāhya kumbhaka.* It takes place at the Point of origin, 12 *inches* away from the nostril. One experiences here the absence of limitations caused by body, mind etc. Because the sun and moon merge, the seeker goes beyond time and space.

'When we talk of sun absorbing the moon, it means the *apāna* wind merges in *prāna*. This takes place at heart space. The heart space represents the sun or in other words consciousness. It is an ever-glowing light. When this light flares out, we call it *apāna*. We also name it as the moon. What truly exists is only one – the sun. The sun gives the illusory appearance of *apāna, vyāna, samāna and udāna.*

'When the conflation takes place in *antah kumbhaka*, the seeker will be freed from inner darkness (= ignorance). With the inner darkness gone, the external darkness (= ignorance due to senses) will not be a hassle any more.

'Every thing in this world is covered by a veil of ignorance. That is the darkness in the heart. It appears externally as darkness during nights. It blocks the appearance of outside objects. An individual's consciousness from his mind (*antahkarana*) flows through his sensory organs and reaches the object. The veil of ignorance surrounding the object is removed. The object then appears to the viewer.'

[**Note:** These issues were explained in detail under the section: "Vritti Vyāpti and Phala Vyāpti" (Extension of Thought-Wave and Cognition-Wave) of Mumukshu Vyavahara Prakarana, the Chapter on ' the external object is the light from inside. If one is able to see the inner light through *antah kumbhaka*, the external and internal darknesses will both vanish

together. Hence contemplation on *antah kumbhaka* will also lead to *nirvāṇa*. Let us now consider the concept of 'inner' and 'external'.

'Shadows lengthen as the sun sets. A shortening shadow indicates that the sun is coming up. In a similar way, when the speed of *prāna* decreases, *apāna* grows. When *apāna* calms down, *prāna* emanates. Where *prāna* originates, *apāna* ends there. Where *apāna* begins, *prāna* terminates. Expressing this process in a different way, we may say that *prāna* has an illusory appearance as *apāna* at the Point of Origin. *apāna* gets the illusory appearance of *prāna* in the heart space. Therefore, a seeker practicing *kumbhaka* at any one of the places is aiming at the same substance. That is Pure Consciousness.

'Like the fragrance in a flower, Consciousness which is the substratum for all, is existing in *prāna* wind. Like sweetness in water, *apāna* also has Consciousness as its substratum. Thus what the seeker is targeting at both the places is Consciousness that forms the substratum.

**प्राणस्य प्राणनं प्रोच्चैः परं जीवस्य जीवनम् ।**
**देहस्य धारणं धुर्यं चिदात्मानमुपास्महे ।।**

*prāṇasya prāṇanaṃ proccaiḥ paraṃ jīvasya jīvanam* |
*dehasya dhāraṇaṃ dhuryaṃ cidātmānamupāsmahe* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 25, Sloka 64

'The Life-principle in *prāna*, i.e. aliveness in an individual or the very support for the body is Pure Consciousness. We meditate on That. This in essence is the "Meditation on *prāna*."'

**15. Ritualistic Vow on Consciousness**

[Note: Speaking thus, Bhusunda was lost in deep contemplation. He articulated twelve verses ending in **चिदात्मानमुपास्महे** *cidātmānamupāsmahe* as chorus. Not contended with it, he continued his dialogue into the next Sarga.]

**Bhusunda:** 'Great Sage! I obtained calmness of mind from the practice of unifying *prāna* (*prāna samadhi*). I do not forego this contemplation even for a second. I do not lose my unity with Self whether I sit, stand, walk about, awake, asleep or dreaming. Thus turning my gaze inwards, I do not get entangled in worldly affairs.

**न भूतं न भविष्यं च चिन्तयामि कदाचन ।**
**दृष्टिमालम्ब्य तिष्ठामि वर्तमानामिहात्मना ।।**

*na bhūtaṃ na bhaviṣyaṃ ca cintayāmi kadācana* |
*dṛṣṭimālambya tiṣṭhāmi vartamānāmihātmanā* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 26, Sloka 8

'I do not think of the past or future. I concentrate my mind on the present. Hence my intellect is always in a state equivalent to deep sleep (*suśupti*). I retain discretion of what is true and what is untrue in this condition; but I do not have attachment to anything. Thus, I am free from disease and death. Thus able to live for a long period.

**प्राणापानसमायोगसमयं समनुस्मरन् ।**
**स्वयमात्मनि तुष्यामि चिरं जीवाम्यनामयः ।।**

*prāṇāpānasamāyogasamayaṃ samanusmaran* |
*svayamātmani tuṣyāmi ciraṃ jīvāmyanāmayaḥ* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 26, Sloka 11

'Remembering all the time the Pure Consciousness substance that appears at the confluence of *prāna and apāna*, I am fully content within myself and I stay immortal. I am totally rid of differences, desires and impressions (*vāsanās*). A viewpoint that everything is Consciousness has fortified in me.

**घटश्चिच्चित्पटश्चित्खं चिद्वनं शकटं च चित् ।**
**चित्सर्वमिति मे भावस्तेन जीवाम्यनामयः ।।**

*ghaṭaścicciccitpaṭaścitkhaṃ cidvanaṃ śakaṭaṃ ca cit* |
*citsarvamiti me bhāvastena jīvāmyanāmayaḥ* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 26, Sloka 38

'The pot is Consciousness, the cloth is Consciousness, the wood is Consciousness, the cart is Consciousness and all that is visible is Consciousness. Thus is my meditation. By the strength of this meditation, I am living for a long time without death.'

[**Note:** Chatting thus, Bhusunda again went into a trance of beatitude. He sang nearly 25 verses ending with the refrain, '**तेन जीवाम्यनामयः**' '*tena jīvāmyanāmayaḥ'* (therefore, I am living long conquering death)." These 25 verses are fit to be recited every day by those who wish to unite themselves with Self. Without elaborating on these verses, as that would lengthen the present text too much, we shall directly proceed to the closing words of Bhusunda, the great Yogi.]

**Bhusunda:** 'Great Sage, I spelt out what I am in this phenomenal world which appears to depend on cause-effect relationship and how I remain immortal. I spoke so elaborately at your command only, but not to show off my knowledge as you yourself are one who attained Self-Knowledge.'

**Vasishta:** 'Oh Godly (*Bhagavan*) Bhusunda! How extraordinary is your life-story! It is indeed a commentary on what the Vedas talk of. You appear as another Brahma. I traveled in all the four quarters in the three *lokas* (worlds) and met many a Self-knowing individual. But I have not met such an exceptional Yogi like you so far. I am blessed by your audition to me. May Everything Prove Auspicious to You! Please do depart into your cave. It is already noon. I have to get back to the Sapta Rsishi Loka (World of the Seven Sages – Great Bear Constellation). Kindly allow me to leave.'

Sage Vasishta then addressed Rama as follows:

**Vasishta:** "Rama, Bhusunda stood up hurriedly as soon as I spoke those words. He originated two hands by his 'resolve' (*sankalpa*). Tender golden leaves appeared in his

hands. They changed into small cups. Soon the cups were filled with pollen from the flowers of Wish fulfilling Tree, dewdrops, and beads of pearls. He used those cups as votary vessels. Immersed in total dedication, that great Yogi worshipped me as one would worship God Shiva. I could understand how blemishless the humility and devotion of a Self-Knowing individual would be. So I waited for him to complete the ritual of worship. Then excusing myself saying that he need not come to see me off as he was a very aged individual, I flew away by celestial path. When I looked back after going about a couple of miles, I found the rook following me with merciful looks.

I turned back, held him closely and patted his back. I could send him back only with great difficulty. Admittedly, it is hard for anybody to leave the company of noble people!

"Rama, when do you think this interview with Bhusunda took place? It was in the two hundredth year in Krita yuga when I met Bhusunda for the first time. Krita yuga is gone and we are now past half of Treta yuga. Recently, that is to say about 800 years ago, I met him again. He is in the same condition as I saw him earlier.

"Rama! You should emulate Bhusunda , the Great Yogi, follow the method of breath-control, attain Self-Knowledge and obtain the state that he achieved."

[**Note: 'द्वौ क्रमो चित्तनाशस्य योगो ज्ञानं च राघव'** '*dvau kramo cittanāśasya yogo jñānaṃ ca rāghava'* (Upasama Prakarana, Sarga 78, Sloka 8) It was stated in Yoga Vasishta - Book 5 - The Calm Down" that there were two methods for quietening the mind. They are the Knowledge Path and the Yoga Path. The life story of Sage Uddalaka exemplified the Yoga Path. Over a dozen techniques of Yoga Path were also briefly touched upon in the 78th Sarga of that chapter. Later from the 80th to 84th Sargas, Sage Vasishta narrated the system adopted by Sages Samvarta and Vitahavya in training their sensory organs in the perception of Truth.

At that juncture he compared the body to a house. Using the same comparison, Sage Vasishta described the story of Yogi Bhusunda, the Rook. Bhusunda's story is a blend at one place of several issues like: transcending the body through the technique of breath control and effortless realization of Supreme Knowledge by that method. The story also indicated that every type of person was eligible to adopt this path.

Sage Bhusunda stabilized his understanding of Self-Knowledge and passed through several Kalpas of Brahma's creation. He lived for long. Sage Vasishta established through this story that the Path of Yoga leads to everlasting Self-Knowledge and there was no difference in the final result obtained either through the Path of Yoga or the path of Knowledge. Having done this, Sage Vasishta resumed further explication of the Path of Knowledge, which was his preferred approach. A question posed by Rama facilitated continuation of the discourse as described below.]

**Rama:** "Revered Teacher! The story of Bhusunda is quite remarkable! However, I have a question. You described the body as a house with bones as brick walls and skin as the roof. There are nerves in it. Life force moves through them. You say that by controlling this movement we could achieve salvation. But who constructed the house of body and who lives in it?"

**Vasishta:** "I talked about it in great detail in the Chapter on Creation (Book 3 - Utpatti Prakarana).' I explained, Rama there that the body was not really constructed by anybody. I said that it was purely an illusory manifestation like two moons appearing to a person with a defective vision. I had also indicated that it could be said to be either existent or

non-existent.

"You are asking about the body that is visible when you are awake. How about the body that you see in your dream? Where did that originate? You see other bodies too besides yours in your dream. You might have fought with some of them. Where did they come from? "You have only one answer for all these questions. You will say that they are the modified forms of your own thoughts. So my answer to your question now too is the same! Hiranyagarbha, the first individual, the composite of the minds of all people, had a dream. One of the bodies created in that dream is Bhusunda's body."

**Rama:** "Why should it get this particular form, that of a crow?"

**Vasishta:** "Past impressions are the cause for that. The particular form of body an individual gets depends on his thoughts. The thoughts are in turn governed by his past impressions. The spacetime reference frames too differ depending on his thoughts. A person sleeping in a tiny room may dream of flying around in vast space. Within the duration of few minutes of dream, he may dream of 50 years of life! The only reason for all such modifications lies in the stored impressions. The impressions can't be purged so easily."

**16. Right Perception**

**Rama:** "What then is the way to purify one's self?"

**Vasishta:**

**सम्यगालोकमात्रेण स्वभावः शुद्धिमृच्छति**
*samyagālokamātreṇa svabhāvaḥ śuddhimṛcchati*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 28, Sloka 46

"Proper discernment! Correct perception! They are the only keys for purifying oneself." (The word '*svabhāva*' in the above verse means the individual, *jīva*).

"A small lad misapprehended a gold nodule to be copper. His father corrected him and said it was not copper. But the boy insisted that it was copper. The father melted the nodule and showed its true nature. The boy then grasped it to be gold. When a person understands tenaciously in that way, he will not make a mistake again. In the same manner, one should practice proper perception. "Everything visible in the world including the pairs of opposites like birth and death, heaven and hell, knowledge and ignorance and so on is no different from Self-luminous Consciousness. An ability to look at things in this mode is proper vision. That is the Proper Knowledge (*samyak jnānam*). This has to be cultivated."

**Rama:** "By what method can this be cultivated, Sir?"

**Vasishta:** "There are two approaches.

**नाहमस्मि न मे भोगाः सत्या इत्यभिभाविते ।।**
**नेदमाडम्बरं व्यर्थमनर्थायावभासते ।**
**अहमेव वा सर्वं चिदित्येवं विभाविते ।।**
**नेदमाडम्बरं व्यर्थमनर्थायावभासते ।**
**दर्शनद्वयमप्येतत्सत्यमत्यन्तसिद्धिदम् ।।**
**यदेकमेतयोवेत्सि रम्यं तद्राम संश्रय ।**
**द्वाभ्यामेवाथ वै ताभ्यां दर्शनाभ्यामिहानघ ।।**

**विहरन्कुरु कल्याण रागद्वेषपरिक्षयम् ।**
**द्वाभ्यामेवाथ वै ताभ्यां दर्शनाभ्यामिहानघ ।।**

*nāhamasmi na me bhogāḥ satyā ityabhibhāvite||*
*nedamāḍambaraṃ vyarthamanarthāyāvabhāsate|*
*ahameva hi vā sarvaṃ cidityevaṃ vibhāvite||*
*nedamāḍambaraṃ vyarthamanarthāyāvabhāsate|*
*darśanadvayamapyetatsatyamatyantasiddhidam||*
*yadekametayovetsi ramyaṃ tadrāma saṃśraya|*
*dvābhyāmevātha vai tābhyāṃ darśanābhyāmihānagha||*
*viharankuru kalyāṇa rāgadveṣaparikṣayam |*
*dvābhyāmevātha vai tābhyāṃ darśanābhyāmihānagha ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 28, Slokas 70 to 73

"One way is to contemplate that: 'I' does not exist and whatever comfort or happiness is experienced is not real. The second way is to contemplate that: whatever is seen is 'I' only and what all is seen is Pure Consciousness only. The turmoil of the world will not be able to bind us down if we contemplate in either way. Whichever way you feel comfortable with, please follow it . Alternately, you may adopt both methods as per convenience and go beyond likes and dislikes. Abandon thoughts and abide in your True Form.

**न ते जन्म न ते दुःखं न दोषास्ते न ते भ्रमाः ।**
**सर्वं संकल्पमुत्सृज्य तिष्ठात्मनि सुसंस्थितः ।।**

*na te janma na te duḥkhaṃ na doṣāste na te bhramāḥ |*
*sarvaṃ saṃkalpamutsṛjya tiṣṭhātmani susaṃsthitaḥ ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 28, Sloka 94

"You are not born. You do not have sorrow. You don't have any defects. Nor are there any illusions for you. Leave all thoughts and stay eternally as Supreme Self."

Talking thus, Sage Vasishta, himself was absorbed in total Bliss. He delivered a magnificent sermon on Self in 90 verses. As a result, the minds of his audience dissolved.

Sri Rama went into deep meditation (*samadhi*). Noticing Rama's condition, Sage Vasishta remained silent for about half an hour. After Rama opened his eyes, Sage Vasishta recommenced his discourse."

Sage Vasishta did not feel smug that his student entered deep meditation as a result of his teaching. Serious minded people generally have a tendency of being lost in a thing they are intensely involved with. Such an involvement is not adequate in the pursuit of spiritual knowledge. The meditative state obtained through serious contemplation should be steady in all conditions and at all times. Only then such transient meditations are fruitful. Sage Vasishta learnt this fact from God Shiva a long time ago. With the intention of conveying this to Rama, he continued his dialogue with a narration of the story of Shiva.

**17. Sermon By Shiva**

**Vasishta:** "Rama!

एवमेवावलम्ब्यार्थं तिष्ठ नेह पदं कृथाः ।

*evamevāvalambyārthaṃ tiṣṭha neha padaṃ kṛthāḥ |*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 29, Sloka 5

"You have now gained superior knowledge. Do not fall back into the illusory world. Stay in the Supreme state.

"It is not difficult to remain so. Recall what we discussed earlier regarding cessation of thought process. Never hold the wheel at the rim to stop the wheel of births and deaths. Hold it at its center and clasp it tight. The center of the wheel of the world is 'mentation'. Do not allow fluctuation in the mind by practice and detachment with determination. Be skillful and gentle. Moreover, follow scriptural stipulations. You should not slacken your effort or leave things to God's mercy, because we said that the world is illusory.

दैवैकपरतां त्यक्त्वा बालबोधोपकल्पिताम्
निजं प्रयत्नमाश्रित्य चित्तमादौ निरोधयेत्
*daivaikaparatāṃ tyaktvā bālabodhopakalpitām*
*nijaṃ prayatnamāśritya cittamādau nirodhayet*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 29, Sloka 9

"The concept that destiny rules the world is meant only for the immature. Hence forget it and work hard to control your mind.

"The first impediment in this is 'attachment' to the body. In one way, the body in the picture is better than this live body of skin and bones. For, the body in a painting continues to shine at least for a decade but your body decays in spite of being nourished everyday!

"Another important point is that we got this body as a result of our persistent contemplation for a prolonged period in our previous births. Influenced by what you had seen during the day, say, you get a new body in your dreams. What is the difference between the two bodies ? You experience happiness and misery from both of them. The dream body had gone (after waking up). The present body is going to pass away. In a sense we may say the dream body was better because we got it without any effort.

"Reflecting thus, firm up your thought that the present body eventually crumbles, has no value and is useless. Proceed then to focus your mind on the unchanging eternal Self. Our body does not disintegrate merely because we have been cogitating in this manner. Whatever has to be done by this body will also not cease to take place. You should note that what actually identifies us with the body and ties us down is not the work we do with the body but what motivates the work – ego and the sense of 'doership', the arrogance that 'I am doing'. To start with, withdraw yourself from the egoistic feeling. Totally ignore the ego. Do not even pause to analyze whether ego exists or not. Do not even think about it. If you continue to disregard the ego along these lines, it will permanently leave you. You are the Self, the

Supreme Self. You permeate everything and everywhere. But it is not related to ego. Do not ever forget this."

**Rama:** "Respected Sir, we have many Vedic statements that say:

**केनेषितं पतति पेषितं मनः** *keneṣitaṃ patati peṣitaṃ manaḥ*

'What moves the mind is Self',

**ऊर्ध्वं प्राणं उन्नमयति अपानं प्रत्यगस्यति** *ūrdhvaṃ prāṇaṃ unnamayati apānaṃ pratyagasyati*

'Self moves the *prāna* wind upward and the *apāna* wind downward'.

"From such sentences, we can understand that what primes the organs and *prāna* and *apāna* winds is Self Itself. Does it not contradict Vedas if you now take the stand that Self is not the cause for any thing?"

**Vasishta:** "Rama! You have to bear in mind in what context those statements were made in the Vedas. For example, take the statement that 'space' is the cause for the birth of a plant. Can we attribute causal doership to space because of this quote? Does it amount to negating the Vedic statement if we say that 'space' is not the doer? A number of things are required for a plant to germinate – e.g. seeds, soil, water etc. (Here the word cause is used to include both causal and enabling factors). Even if these are present, the plant will not germinate if a heavy boulder is placed over it. So free space is required in addition to water, soil etc. We may say that 'space' is also one of the enabling factors in the germination of a plant. Thus, the above Vedic statement gets validated by this argument.

Even then, one cannot attribute doership to space. We have to understand from the above quote that a plant geminates in the presence of 'space'. In a similar vein, when the Vedas say that the mind is primed by Self, we have to understand that the mind works in the presence of Self.

"As a matter of fact, the mind gets a shape because of Self. The earth and sky seem to be touching each other. This does not mean that those two are the same. Similarly, the Consciousness Self and inert mind can never be the same though seemingly they may be in contact."

**Rama:** "Agreed that Self is not related to mind or senses. How can the mind or sensory organs get the feeling of 'beingness'? Or would you now like to revise your statement and say that Self is associated with the mind and senses ? It is a conundrum!"

**Vasishta:** "We discussed it a couple of times before. Though there is no real association, it apparently looks as if Self induces the mind and senses and brings about a feel of beingness because of an "Imaginary identification (**तादात्म्याध्यास** *tādātmyādhyāsa*)." ('*tādātmya*' means identification of one with the other; '*adhyāsa*' means imagination. '*tādātmyādhyāsa*' is an illusory feeling that 'that is myself'.) Therefore, Rama, do not fall into the trap of identifying yourself with the mind. You are the omniscient Supreme Self !

"You may misunderstand what I have just said now to imply that there are two real things – a Consciousness Self and an inert mind. But that is not what I mean. Suppose I say that a stone is 'hard.' It does not mean that 'hardness' exists as a separate independent entity. Hardness cannot have an 'existence' on its own without the stone.

We cannot say that hardness is stone. Just because we say that they are separate, 'hardness' does not acquire 'beingness'. Self and mind and other things in the world are related in the same way. We should not think that Self and the world are one; we cannot also think that the world has an independent existence. Discard any attachment to the world. Do not be attracted by it. Learn to look at everything in the world as a form of Self."

**18. Worshipping Shiva Within the Mind (Shiva Mānasa Puja)**

**Rama**: "Is it not quite difficult to do so?"

**Vasishta:** "There is an easy way out. It is called the method of "Shiva Mānasa Puja." Lord Shiva personally taught the technique to me. Let me reveal it to you.

"A long time ago I was living on Mount Kailasa worshipping Shiva. I used to spend my time piously in penance or performing austerities, in meditation or in discussions on our scriptures with Saints. It was the evening after sunset on the eighth day in the New Moon phase of the month Shravana. It was very auspicious to worship Shiva on this day at that time. So I began meditating on Shiva immediately after sunset."

[**Note:** The eighth day in the New Moon phase of the month Shravana (Shravana generally corresponds to the month August in Gregorian calendar) is celebrated by us as the Birth Day of Lord Shri Krishna. After Krishna's birth it is known as "Shri Krishna Astami." But a reference to that day in Yogavaasishta shows that it was considered as a very auspicious day even in ancient times prior to Sri Krishna's birth. It was deemed auspicious for worshipping Shiva. We may infer from this story that Lord Krishna chose that specific day for his incarnation because of its well-established piousness.]

"I was deeply immersed in my meditation for over a period of three hours. When I opened my eyes, it was already very dark. I saw in that darkness a brilliant white light beam coming from distant woods. I examined the visible ray of light with my inner eye.
"I could see its significance! Lord Shiva accompanied by his consort Goddess Parvati and His attendants headed by Bull Nandi appeared before me. I was overjoyed.

I woke up my disciples who were asleep. I hurriedly collected befitting oblations like water and other votive material. I offered the same to the Lord and the Goddess. I worshipped and served them. Overcome by the emotion of devotion, I worshipped Him and sang hymns for a long time. I recited Vedic mantras. Lord Shiva too was in no hurry. He sat down patiently on the seat of flowers offered by me. After I calmed down a bit, the Lord addressed me with serene looks as follows:

**Shiva:** 'Great Sage! Have you grasped the Supreme Self? Are you stabilized there and resting ? Could you achieve the final thing? Are you free of fears now?'

**Vasishta:** 'My Lord! It is a great fortune for an individual if Lord Shiva by Himself remembers him. There is no luck that is not available to a person blessed thus nor there would be any fear that is not eradicated. Remembering you all the time, I could cross all perils easily. However, I have one question to ask you, Lord, if you permit me!"

**Shiva:** 'Please go ahead.'

**Vasishta:** 'Kindly tell me, Oh Lord, clearly and decisively which ritual of worship to God

will annihilate all sins and will bestow absolute auspiciousness.'

**19. What is meant by "God"?:**

**Shiva:** "Oh Best of all Sages! That is a good question. But are you aware what or who is God? The word God does not indicate Lord Vishnu, Shiva, or Brahma. God is not Indra, Sun, Fire, Brahmin, you or me! In sum, any thing that is limited by a body, mind and so on can never be a God.

**अकृत्रिममनाद्यन्तं देवनं देव उच्यते ।।**

*akṛtrimamanādyantaṃ devanaṃ deva ucyate* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 29, Sloka 121

'The Sanskrit word '*deva* (god)' is derived from the root '*div*'. '*Div*' stands for *krīḍā, vijigeeśa, vyvahāra, dyuti, stuti, moda, mada, svapna, kānti, gati*. It has the following meanings:

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| to play; | to desire success; | to transact; | to shine; | to praise; | to be |
| happy; | to feel proud; | to sleep | to want; | and | to move. |

'Except for the meaning of "To be happy", all the other meanings represent what arises as an effect after an action is done. If happiness pertains to the senses, that also results from an action. Hence they are all artificial, man-made. There is one happiness, which is not artificial. That is eternal bliss. That is the happiness of consciousness (*chit + shivam = chichchivam*). It has neither a beginning nor an end. Such eternal Happiness is the True God. One should worship that. That is the only thing that has an existence. All other substances are such that we cannot tell if they exist or do not exist (*sadasad rūpa*).

'If a person is unable to walk a distance of ten kilometers, you encourage him to go for at least a hundred meters. Similarly, Vedas talk about Rudra and other forms of gods limited in space and time and instruct people to pray to those forms just to cheer them up in case they (such people) cannot meditate on the Infinite (without a beginning or end), Natural (not artificial), Happiness of Consciousness (**चिदानन्द** *cidānanda*). Worshipping finite god forms yields limited results only. In contrast, if you meditate on infinite Happiness of Consciousness, the effect will not be artificial (i.e. will not be attainable by action). It will be ever-present and enduring. Such an effect is the Bliss of Self. To put it plainly, a person who forgoes such never- ending Bliss to the limited effects of praying to finite forms of gods is like one who deserts parks full of fragrant flowers preferring odorless woods. Worship of everlasting Auspiciousness (*ṣiva*) is True worship.

'There are three important flowers for this worship. They are:

1. Knowledge;
2. Equanimity (i.e. a worldview of perceiving everything to be a form of Pure Consciousness like 'me'); and
3. Calmness (inner peace or control of inner senses).

'The God to be adored with these three flowers is Shiva as Consciousness. He is also known as the Supreme Self. Hence the true worship of a God is worship of Self. Those who go after praying to forms with attributes forsaking the Self, will be lost in the wheel of births

and deaths.

'You may, however, find a few people who know the essence of Knowledge but still perform idol worship. The worship of such people is like elderly persons playing kid- games with children. It is never done with a desire for the pleasures in this world. Let me reiterate: Self is God. Self is Shiva. Self is the cause of all causes. Self is itself Consciousness-space. So worship always that Self with Knowledge!"

[**Note:** Consciousness-space is explained while narrating The Story of Leela in the Chapter on Creation, Utpatti Prakarana, Book 3 of our Series.]

**Vasishta:** 'Master! You say that Consciousness-space is the cause for this world comprising both conscious and inert things. Does it not imply that consciousness exists in inert form in the world and Consciousness takes birth as an individual (*jīva*) in the cycle of births and deaths?'

**Shiva:** 'You are looking at the world compartmentalizing it into two parts. Consciousness (**चित्** *cit* ) means 'Seer' endowed with consciousness. Perceivables ( **चेत्य** *cetya* ) are the things experienced by the Seer. When Consciousness is self-luminous, perceivables obtain luminosity from It. Then they become perceivable. Therefore, visibility of perceivables is dependent on the luminescence of Consciousness (**चित्** *cit*).

'Please consider this now. Is there a difference between Consciousness being self-luminescent and Consciousness being existence? Whatever exists can be perceived. Whatever is perceived can only exist. It is merely a difference in expression, in semantics. There is no real distinction. Existence (beingness) of all substances in the world depends on the beingness of Consciousness. So I hold that Consciousness is the cause for the world.

'We may understand this in another way also. Vedas maintain that Consciousness is invariant in time, space and content. There are no internal or external differences in Consciousness. If anything other than Consciousness exists, the Vedic statement becomes invalid. But it cannot be so. Hence if tripartite indivisibility has to be valid, we have to admit that there is no beingness for the things in the world. There is no other way. But we see an apparent 'existence'. Such an apparent existence has to be a reflection of the 'beingness of Pure Consciousness.'

**Vasishta:** 'If there is no 'beingness' for the things in the world, why do we perceive the world to be existent?'

**Shiva:** 'The sun shines like a disc in the sky. We see light here where we are. What is this light here? It is the sun's own glow. But laymen do not understand this simple thing; they call him sun over there and the brightness here as sunlight. In the same way, Consciousness-Self radiates brilliance like the sun. The world is comparable to the sunlight and is emanating from it. The fact is both the world and the Self are one and the same. Ignorant people are unable to comprehend this. They consider the formless one as Consciousness-Self and the one with a name and form as 'world'. Because of such a wrong conviction, the objects of the world appear to be different from the Self.

**Vasishta:** 'Is it correct then to say that Consciousness-Self changed as the objects of the world?'

**Shiva:** 'No, it is not correct. Change implies that a thing consists of smaller units (parts)

within itself (*swagata bheda*). We have already said that Consciousness-Self does not have any parts within it. Hence we cannot use the term 'change.'

When we see a snake instead of a rope, we cannot say that the rope has 'changed' to a snake. We have to describe it as an 'illusion' (mistaken perception of one thing to be another). What is obtained in the world too is similar to it. What exists in the world is ONLY Consciousness-Self. There is no other thing. Whether they are the five fundamental elements or an individual self, a mountain, a river, a tree or anything in the world, all of them are Consciousness-Self. They can be taken as synonyms to Consciousness-Self."

**Vasishta:** 'Your words sound very weird, Master! You hold that a mountain, a river, the sky etc. are synonyms. But our scriptures talk of several varieties within space itself like **भूतआकाश , अव्याकृत आकाश , चिदाकाश** *bhūta ākāśa , avyākṛta ākāśa , cidākāśa* . How does one reconcile these statements ?'

**Shiva:** 'Reconciliation is possible. You have to go to the root derivations of the words. You gave three names of space. All three of them have '*aakaasa*' common to them. The Sanskrit root for '*ākāsa'* is '*kāsru deeptau*'. It means to glow. Only Consciousness-Self has the quality of self-luminance. Hence the three 'spaces' you mention are forms of Consciousness-Self.

'Or for that matter take a word like '*jagat*' (world) which is very different from 'space'. *Jagat* is derived from the Sanskrit root '*gam gatau*'. It means movement. There is a principle of grammar saying '*ye gatyārthāh, te gyānārthāh*' meaning that all words that denote movement also connote knowledge. From this, we can decipher that the word '*jagat*' contains within it 'knowledge.' Knowledge is none other than Consciousness-Self! Therefore, I would say that all words are synonyms for Consciousness-Self.

'The long and short of it is that the only God we have is Consciousness-Self who pervades the entire world. Consciousness-Self is the Supreme Self, the Supreme Brahman. If we worship, we should worship Him only. That is the only worship befitting people of your ilk. No externals like flowers, lamps, incense etc. are required for the worship.'

**20, Where does God exist ?**

**Vasishta:** 'Where in the world do we locate him to direct our worship?'

**Shiva**:

**न स दूरे स्थितो ब्रह्मन्न दुष्प्रापः स कस्यचित् ।**
**संस्थितः स सदा देहे सर्वत्रैव च खे तथा ।।**

*na sa dūre sthito brahmanna duṣprāpaḥ sa kasyacit |*
*saṃsthitaḥ sa sadā dehe sarvatraiva ca khe tathā ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 30, Sloka 2

'Great Sage! God is not far away. Nor is it difficult to find Him. The entire space is filled with Him. And so is your whole body filled with Him because it is He who entered your body in the form of 'individual self'.

'It is God, the Supreme Consciousness who exists and moves around in the senses that exist within the body intertwined indistinguishably within themselves; it is God, the Supreme Consciousness who exists and moves in the series of five sheaths that are inside one

another; and it is God, the Supreme Consciousness who, knowing them and with their help, creates the world during the superimposition phase and dissolves it during sublation phase.

'It is God, the Supreme Consciousness who constructs the three worlds. He plays in them as Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwar. He is the light of those worlds. He is also the darkness of those worlds. The entire universe is full of Consciousness. What is everywhere is Consciousness and nothing else. Every visible thing is merely a form of Consciousness.'

**Vasishta:** 'My Lord! If the entire world is Consciousness and if the body is also Consciousness, how did the body acquire the characteristics of sleep, death, passing out (fainting) etc.? How can such characteristics have inert ignorance within them? Further, everybody in this world knows that a living body that is conscious becomes a corpse without consciousness on death. How can this happen if the world is all nothing but Consciousness?"

**Shiva:** 'A very good question indeed.

**जडगतेरवलोकय शक्ततां निजपदस्मरणेन विनेह चित् ।**
**व्रजति कष्टमधः पतनाय या यदरघट्टघटीघनपीठवत् ।।**

*jaḍagateravalokaya śaktatāṃ nijapadasmaraṇena vineha cit |*
*vrajati kaṣṭamadhaḥ patanāya yā yadaraghaṭṭaghaṭīghanapīṭhavat ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 30, Sloka 109

Sage Vasishta, I did mention earlier that Consciousness creates the world in the superimposition phase and dissolves it in the sublation phase. Please assay this a bit. Know it to be due to the power of ignorance which is inert. Consciousness forgets its original form under the sway of nescience. It gets yanked up and down like the space within a pot hanging at the end of a counterpoise lift.

'Are there any bounds for space? Space is infinite. But being confined within the walls of the pot, space thinks it is limited. It attained the famous name of 'pot-space'. The limited pot-space acquiesces to the lever and keeps swinging up and down. Consciousness acquires the states lacking in sentience (like sleep, death, inertness etc.) because of the limitations it imagines on itself.

'Desires emanate from nescience. Effect of action done out of desire clings to Consciousness-Self. As a result, Consciousness-Self keeps oscillating between higher (Heaven) and lower worlds (Earth and Hell).'

[**Note:** A counterpoise lift (also called water-crane or shadoof) is a water-lifting device to lift water to the agricultural field from a canal that is at a lower level. It consists of a suspended pivoted lever with a pot (scoop) hanging at one end and a counter weight at the other end. It is manually operated to dip the pot in water and lift it with the help of the counter weight.]

'We have the following Vedic dictum to support what we said.

**यथाकारी यथाचारी तथा भवति । साधुकारी साधुर्भवति**
**पापकारी पापो भवति पुण्यः पुण्येन कर्मणा भवति पापः पापेन ।**

*yathākārī yathācārī tathā bhavati | sādhukārī sādhurbhavati*
*pāpakārī pāpo bhavati puṇyaḥ puṇyena karmaṇā bhavati pāpaḥ pāpena |*

Brihadarnyakopanishat iv -iv-5

'His deeds follow the type of body he possesses. If he is born as a man, he acts like a human. If he is born as a beast, he will behave like an animal. If he performs meritorious works having been born as a human being, he will be born with merits. If he does wrong things, he will be born as a sinner. Good deeds yield merit. Sinful acts result in sins.

**चित्तं हि कारणं त्वस्याः संसारानुभवे चितेः ।**
**न च तत्कारणं किंचिच्चित्त्वान्यत्वात्यसंभवात् ।।**

*cittaṃ hi kāraṇaṃ tvasyāḥ saṃsārānubhave citeḥ |*
*na ca tatkāraṇaṃ kiṃciccittvānyatvātyasaṃbhavāt ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 31, Sloka 4

'Hence 'mind' takes form within Consciousness-Self under the influence of nescience. Consciousness-Self is able to enjoy the perceivables in the world through mind. There is no real reason behind the origin of mind. After all, there is no Real substance in this world other than the Consciousness-Self.

'Mind which originated without a reason produces the perceivables. Hence we have to say that there is no reason for the perceivables too. In the absence of legitimate causal factors, we have to agree that both mind and perceivables do not exist. Because both mind and perceivables lack existence, we have to admit that Consciousness-Self has always remained pure. This is the final Truth. Consciousness alone exists. So the world apparently consisting of different things does not have an existence.'

**21. Experiencing Happiness and Sorrow is a Defect of the Individual**

**Vasishta:** 'Oh Supreme Lord! A while ago you said that Consciousness existed in everything and it had assumed the experiencer phase as an individual (*jīva*). Now you indicate that there is nothing like an individual and what all exists is Pure Consciousness. I suppose that there is a 'collective mind' behind all the individual minds. Upanishads also speak of Hiranyagarbha (collective mind). Because of the thought waves of Hiranyagarbha, Consciousness enters a multiplicity of bodies and goes through a variety of sorrowful and happy experiences. It is quite logical thus far. So far so good. However, a question arises here. How do individuals avoid the hazards of happiness and misery? It looks like it is impossible to get rid of them because they are the result of the strong thought waves in Hiranyagarbha who are superior to an individual.'

**Shiva:** "No, that is not true. It is not due to the fault of Hiranyagarbha that you acquire sorrow and happiness. It is your own mistake. I shall explain how it works.'

[**Note:** It is very difficult to appreciate the intricate meaning and significance of the following verse (Sarga 31, Sloka 12) without the aid of the commentary of Shri Ananda Bhodendra Saraswati Swamy (Shri ABS). We shall hence heavily draw upon Shri ABS's interpretation in understanding this verse.]

न चित्तात्कस्यचिद्दोषाज्जातयैतदवाप्यते
तत्सर्वभावनामात्रेणानर्थः प्रकृतः स्थितः

*na cittātkasyaciddoṣājjātayaitadavāpyate*
*tatsarvabhāvanāmātreṇānarthaḥ prakṛtaḥ sthitaḥ*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 31, Sloka 12

(In this verse, the word '*kasya*' means 'of Hiranyagarbha'; '*ciddośāt*' means the defect eclipsing Consciousness).

'Vasishta! You seem to think that a blemish called nescience contaminated Pure Consciousness and as a result of it, Hiranyagarbha originated. You also assumed that Hiranyagarbha's mind was the cause of this creation and because of his mind you are experiencing happiness and sorrow. Nothing is farther than the truth. The series of miseries for you emanates from your thought that some things in Hiranyagarbha's creation are real and some other things are not real. Further, you make the mistake of identifying yourself with some of them by claiming ownership to them and rejecting others. The crux of the problem is your fragmentation of the total creation including the body and senses into 'me and mine' and 'not me and not mine'. Consequently, you have a series of experiences filled with happiness and sorrow called the world.

'If you wish to be free from this misery, get rid of the attachment to your body and other things as 'me' and 'mine'. In order to get rid of the attachment, you need to understand the essence of Truth. For this understanding to dawn, you have to quit thinking about your body to be 'real and existent'. When you give up such thoughts, what's left will be Pure Consciousness.

'The 'individual' (*jīva*) is the chariot for Pure Consciousness. 'Ego' is the vehicle for the individual. 'Intellect' is the car for ego. 'Mind' is the carriage for intellect. The mind rides on 'life-force'. 'Sensory organs' are the cart for life-force. 'Body' is the vehicle for sensory organs. 'Action organs' are the vehicle for the body. The job of all these 'mobiles' (chariots, vehicles etc.) is to maintain the cycle of births and deaths.

'Vasishta, I talked to you about the series of carriages. The strongest of them all are the mind and life-force. If the mind is absorbed in heart space, life-force cannot move any organ. Or if life-force is merged in the air i.e. practicing breath control through retention, the mind will be unable to function. Hence, you can control life-force through mind or rein in mind through life-force. Once these two are under check, you can easily grasp Pure Consciousness that permeates them.

'It is true that Pure Consciousness exists throughout creation. Though sunlight is spread at all places, it does not get reflected from mountainous terrain. It gets reflected from a mirror. Likewise, Pure Consciousness is reflected better by 'The Composite of Eight Cities'. As you are aware, the eight cities are: the five fundamental elements, *antahkarana* (combination of mind, intellect etc.), five life-forces, five sensory organs, five action organs, nescience, desire and action.

These are the eight cities that together constitute the subtle body, known as Composite of eight Cities (*puryaśtakam*).

[**Note:** This matter was already discussed in the 23rd Sarga in The Story of Bhusunda.]

'Mind 'is the most important thing in the Composite of Eight Cities. Hence, Pure Consciousness reflects much better in mind. It primes the bodies through its reflection to take up various actions.

'The root causal nescience has a veiling power. Its quality is to cover up. To begin, it veils its very substratum, Pure Consciousness (Supreme Self, Brahman). Thus it creates the impression that there is no Pure Consciousness and it alone exists in the form of mind. Later on, the same illusory power shows us this world to be a mix of sentient and insentient things, by the force of sentience drawn from its Conscious substratum and insentience drawn from its own self. This gives rise to the 'triad' like 'Seer-Seeing-Seen'.

'From this you can note that the cause for the motility of the body comes from the reflection of Consciousness in the mind. The name of the reflection of Consciousness is the 'individual' (*jīva*). Mobility of the individual comes from the mind. The reason for mind is the veiling power. The veiling power comes from the effects of actions done in past births. The sum and substance of this is that the effects of past actions are behind the series of these developments.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says:

| | |
|---|---|
| **कर्महैव तदूcअतुह्** | **कर्मैव तत्प्रशाशम्सतुह्** |
| *karmahaiva tadūcatuh* | *karmaiva tatpraśāśamsatuh* |

Brihadarnyakopanishad

'Therefore, Oh, Sage, you are entangled in this world owing to the force of your own past actions. Hence, it is your liability. But it is not above you. You can get rid of it if you work hard.'

**Vasishta:** 'My Lord! You say that Pure Consciousness (Supreme Brahman) is reflected in the mind. Mind is a part of the subtle body. The subtle body is made up of the five elements. The five elements fall under the group of material substances. Therefore, the subtle body too should belong to the group of material substances. But elders say that the Supreme Brahman is non-material. How could a material object like mind capture the reflection of a non-material Pure Consciousness?'

**Shiva:** 'That is not difficult to understand. An ordinary mirror is a material thing. Does it not reflect your actions, even though actions by themselves are not solid material? Therefore, it is not correct to assume that material substances can reflect only materials.'

**Vasishta:** 'If sun is reflected in water, the intensity may go down a bit, but will he get blocked totally?'

**Shiva:** 'Something more happens here over and above mere reflection. There would have been no problem if the Supreme Brahman acknowledges that 'I am reflection in the mirror' after getting reflected in a mind. Instead, the Supreme Brahman forgets and starts thinking that 'I am an individual *jīva*'. The situation of the reflection of Consciousness is similar to a

Prince who makes friendship with a Pauper and later starts claiming that he is also a pauper.

'The Supreme Brahman identifies Himself with mind and obtains the properties of mind. It did not stop there. Brahman identified Himself (in an illusory manner) with life-force and obtained the properties of wind like movement. Because of this, the consciousness of an individual is able to cause movement in the body.

[**Note:** Movement is work done. This was discussed in detail in the Chapter: Behavior of an Aspirant, Part I of our Series of Yogavaasishta, under the section: "What is Action?"]

'The creator, Brahma arranged the mind and life-force as two horses to pull the cart called body. As the body gets pulled by the life-force and mind (i.e. as the body ages), illnesses take root in it just like waves follow the floods and with increasing waves comes spume. Escalation of diseases results in death.

'What is death? There is no breeze when a fan stops working. When organs and mind stop functioning, The Composite of Eight Cities too ceases functioning. It weakens. The outer physical body then collapses. This is the abandonment of the body by the 'Power of Consciousness' (**चित् शक्ति** *cit śakti*). That is called death. The individual (*jīva*) forgets his immortal nature and the quality of non-senescence.

But by the force of the impressions stored in him, he gets another body. It is like leaves of a tree -- originate, ripen, dry and fall down but generate again. The individual is reborn. That's how the series of births take place.

[**Note:** A discussion on Death came up in the Chapter: Creation, Utpatti Prakarana, Book 3 of our series on Yoga Vasishta, under the section: What is Death?]

**22. Oneness comes Only If Duality Exists**

**Vasishta:** 'Oh One who wears Moon as an Ornament, My Lord! I am unable to comprehend how the Non-Dual Truth of Consciousness attains duality. I am quite confused. Elders declare that Consciousness is Singular. They say that no in-group, out-group or internal differences exist within it. If there are no such differences, how can so many individuals originate out of it? How could a huge inert world emanate from it?

1. You cannot say that the essence of Consciousness changed by itself into living individuals on one hand and into a vast universe on the other. The root substance should be composed of different fractions for this to happen. But there are no fractions in Consciousness. So a change by itself cannot take place.
2. Can Consciousness change due to any external reasons? We cannot admit it because, as you say, the essence of Consciousness is One, there is no second thing, no other substance apart from itself.
3. Can we say that Consciousness changes into many without a cause? In that case, such a change will be an intrinsic property of Consciousness. Implicitly the cycle of births and deaths would then be an intrinsic nature of Brahman. Such an inherent change cannot be annihilated by means of any knowledge of Truth obtained from the teaching of a Guru. Nobody can be free of the cycles of birth and death. Then all philosophical discussions become a total waste of time.

4. If we postulate that the Supreme Brahman has an extra-ordinary power called Maya to create an illusionary world, several follow up questions come up. For example:
    a. Is this Power of Illusion inherent or external? If it is inherent, it can never be gotten rid off.
    b. If we propose that it was acquired from outside, we will be beset with the questions of how and where from?
    c. If the power of illusion happened on its own, it means that the power of illusion is a natural quality of Brahman. In that case, there can never be liberation.
    d. If the power of illusion has an independent source, a question on the source of that source will arise. Any answer will generate further questions and will become an infinite regress. It would be a problem with no possible solution and indeterminate. (This is called *anavasthā dośa* in Indian logic).
5. Is the illusory power itself an illusion or is it real? This is another major question.
6. If we call it is an illusion, it is equivalent to saying that it has no existence. Could the dualistic world germinate from a non-existing thing? If we say yes, it means that the world has originated from Brahman without a cause. Then it becomes a quality of the Supreme Brahman and there can be no way out of it.
7. Can we call the Power of Illusion to be true? Then the world produced by it has to be also true. A true thing can never be terminated by means of knowledge. This would again imply that Self-Knowledge cannot lead to liberation.

8. It is also not possible to describe the Power of Illusion as neither existing nor non-existing because such a situation can never be obtained.

'My Lord, I am unable to find an answer to this tangle.'

[**Note:** We encountered such complex philosophical discussions near about the 95th Sarga in the Chapter on Creation and 56th Sarga of the Chapter: Sustenance. The corresponding sections were titled, Explanation of the Chart and Scriptural Discussion respectively. The entire subject was covered in two verses at this point in the current chapter. Shri ABS enlarged the content of the two verses into an elaborate discussion. He explained the subtle points of Shiva's response to Sage Vasishta's questions in detail. We shall briefly take a look at the answer given by Shiva keeping the commentary of Shri ABS in mind.]

**Shiva:** 'Vasishta, your question, in short, is how did the non-dual One become two. Let us note what is meant by One and what it means when we say two.

**सति द्वित्वे किलैकं स्यात्सत्येकत्वे द्विरूपता ।**
**कले द्वे अपि चिद्रूपे चिद्रूपत्वात्तदप्यसत् ।।**

*sati dvitve kilaikaṃ syātsatyekatve dvirūpatā* |
*kale dve api cidrūpe cidrūpatvāttadapyasat* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 33, Sloka 4

'See the beauty! If there are two, then only the word 'one' comes up. If there is one, 'the second one' does come along. Does this not sound strange! 'Suppose a person says to himself that there is only one star in the entire sky. How many things are there in total? There

is one, a star and two the speaker. So there are two. But the speaker forgets about himself and says that there is one star. That is the reason I said that 'one' comes only when there are two.

'Suppose a person says that he alone is there. It does not convey complete sense. If he says that he is alone in his house, it conveys a complete meaning. But we clearly see two things in this sentence – one: house and two: 'I'. Even if we neglect conveyance of full sense, when a person says that he is alone, obviously there has to be a listener for this utterance to come out. Therefore, I said that if there is 'one', the 'other' would definitely follow.

'That is the reason why Vedas did not merely declare the Supreme Brahman as 'One'; Vedas also say 'Brahman has no second'. That means the quality of Brahman is not oneness but non-duality. The concept of one in the world is not unrelated to two.

So we cannot apply the usual worldly idea of 'one' to Brahman. Your question about 'One' multiplying itself to many arises out of such a misconception. Therefore, there is an inherent flaw in your question.

'Let me repeat. The 'one' about which your question is concerned is a mundane worldly concept. It necessarily is related to the 'two'. The 'One' that is used in connection with Brahman in the Vedic declaration, "It's One, there is no second", is not linked to numeral two. Your confusion arises out of the mix up of the worldly concept of 'one' with the 'One' used in the Vedic expression.

'Let me explicate further so that it becomes clear. In order to understand clearly what truth is, let us classify truth into three categories:

1. Absolute Truth (**पारमार्थिक सत्य** *pāramārthika satya*).
2. Transactional truth (**व्यावहारिक सत्य** *vyāvahārika satya)*. And,
3. Illusory truth (**प्रातिभासिक सत्य** *prātibhāsika satya*).

'Absolute Truth refers to the Supreme Brahman. Transactional truth refers to your day to day world. This is also referred to as dualistic world or Dualism. Illusory truth conveys misapprehension like seeing silver in nacre or water in a mirage. Now let us find out what is the Real Truth. We can easily understand that Illusory truth cannot be Real. People in the world usually take it for granted that the dualistic Transactional truth is really the truth. If you examine in depth, you will not find any difference between illusory things like mirage and transactional objects such as the five elements. So the dualistic truth is also not Real. Combined with other concomitant supporting evidence, we conclude that Brahman, the Absolute Truth alone is the Real Truth.

'The question now boils down to how could duality arise if Absolute Truth alone is the Real Truth? The implied question within it is: why do the transactional objects and illusory things appear to be true? With this question in mind, Vedas proclaimed that the other two (objects and things) arose from Supreme Brahman. It means to say that it is we who bring the Truthfulness (Beingness, Existence) of Brahman and superpose this quality onto the dualistic world. Consequently the dualism in the world appears as truth to us.

'You raised a doubt regarding the genesis of duality from One Truth. You overlooked the hidden meaning behind the doubt. You took into account only the numerals one and two. The Vedic statements too appear disjointed to you.

'Consider once again the following. Your question was how did the 'two' arise from

‘One’. The ‘One’ in the poser corresponds to the Supreme Brahman. The ‘one’ in your mind relates to the dualistic world. In the transactional world, ‘one’ does not exist by itself, unless there is ‘two’. ‘One’ referring to Brahman is not such a dependent one.

Anticipating the confusion that can arise of naming both as ‘one’, Vedas christened it as “*advitīyam*”, having no second. If you grasp this unequivocally, all this debate becomes redundant.

**23. The Concepts of Superimposition and Sublation**

‘In order to elucidate these issues, we introduced the processes of ‘Superimposition’ (**अध्यारोप** *adhyāropa)* and ‘Sublation’ *(***अपवाद** *apavāda)* for adoption as exercises.

‘Superimposition 'refers to the process of producing the visible world. The nominal causes of desire, action, past impressions etc. combined with the ‘material’ cause of nescience created the subtle elements like space, wind, water, fire and earth. Intermixing (by quintuplication) of these five elements generated the gross world.

‘Sublation refers to the procedure of elimination. This consists of examining the fundamental nature of any substance perceived by your senses. The gross substances are derived from the five gross elements. The five gross elements came from the five subtle elements. The subtle elements originated from nescience. And there is no real basis for nescience. In fact, nescience does not exist. Hence, what truly exists is the Supreme Brahman.

‘We started off with the Supreme Brahman in the process of ‘Superimposition’. We returned to the Supreme Brahman at the end of the process of ‘Sublation’. We said that only Supreme Brahman was True. It would *ipso facto* imply that all the intermediate steps are merely make-believe, untrue. We hypothesized a few intermittent steps in the process of ‘Superimposition’. We eliminated those fictitious steps during the process of ‘Sublation’. Both the build up of the steps and their removal are a fabrication. The fiction is invented to help the seeker in getting firmly established in his contemplation. You made a big issue of explanatory fiction, an imaginary crutch designed for spiritual practice. Does it befit your intelligence?

‘Vasishta! When once you agree to the three states of truth (Absolute, transactional and illusory), and the role of contemplative aids (processes of superimposition and sublation), there can be no room to misapprehend the Vedic statement that the world originated from the Supreme Brahman. If you conceive of the Supreme Brahman as a beautiful creeper, the entire visible world is its stem, branches, leaves, tendrils, flowers etc. ‘What still remains is a strong conviction in your mind about the separateness of the world, the individual and the Lord that we concocted during the process of superimposition. I shall elaborate on the process of superimposition so that it is clear to you that the whole process is nothing but an imagination.

**महाविद्योपनयना चिद्भवत्यभिधा सती ।**
**सा जीवत्वेन बाह्यत्वं तदा द्वीन्द्विव पश्यति ।।**

*mahāvidyopanayanā cidbhavatyabhidhā satī* |
*sā jīvatvena bāhyatvaṃ tadā dvīndviva paśyati* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 33, Sloka 20

‘The undifferentiated non-dual Brahman, looking through a defective eyewear called nescience, sees himself as two, seeing two where only one exists implies a defective vision. He names one of them as ‘an individual’.

Moreover, He forgets His original form to be Supreme Consciousness. Assuming the position of an extraneous individual, He sees the world to be different from Himself.

[**Note:** “Sage Valmiki used the word ‘*upanayana*’ in the first line of the above verse. Commentator Shri ABS interpreted the word to mean colored spectacles. Some take exception to this interpretation on the ground that colored glass specs or cooling glasses could not have existed in the days of Sage Valmiki. The objection is not valid. Medicos like Charaka and Sushruta did mention eyewear aids ( **उपनेत्र** *upanetra* = spectacles) made of crystals, mica etc. in ancient texts of Ayurveda (herbal medicine). We lost these techniques in the intervening period. It is not possible to deny the existence of colored glass eyewear during the times of Sage Valmiki.]

‘He also thinks that he is different from the Supreme Brahman. On the top of it, he weaves a Composite of Eight Cities around himself and enters the wheel of births and deaths. He mistakenly identifies himself with the subtle body (Composite of Eight Cities), becomes an individual (*jīva*) and embarks upon life processes. (Life processes comprise: being alive, respiration and so on).

‘With the imagination getting consolidated that ‘I am the subtle body’, he desires to acquire a gross body. He assumes the form of various cereal grains. Vedic statements confirm this.

**त इह व्रीहि यवास्तिला माषा इति जायन्ते**

*ta iha vrīhi yavāstilā māṣā iti jāyante*

Upanishad

The Supreme Brahman who obtained the form of an individual, also assumes the forms of paddy, barley, sesame, black gram, etc. required by the gross body.

‘The individual who assumed the form of a grain enters the body of a pre-existing man in the form of food. It becomes sperm. As sperm he enters into the womb of his mother at a suitable time and changes into a gross body. From then on, the individual thinks that he is the gross body. He starts perceiving the world through his sensory organs considering the world as external to him. Thus he succumbs to the cycle of births and deaths.’

(**Note:** As the cycle of births and deaths is without a beginning, it should be inferred that a preexisting man and woman as parents were also created by him).

**Vasishta:** ‘My Lord! Let us say that an individual is born as a mosquito. His thoughts and food will be adapted to the requirements of the body of a mosquito. How can he ever lose the body which is habituated to that of a mosquito and get the body of, say, an elephant?’

**Shiva:** ‘Habit is a part of the current suffrage (*prārabdha*) of the individual. Prior to it is the long-term storage of accumulated effects of past actions (*sanchita*). Death comes like a thunderbolt when the effect of some past action fructifies within the current suffrage period. He forgets his recent experiences . Long standing impressions of an elephant body saved in

the long-term storage begin to sprout. That is how a *karma jīvi* (an individual under karmic influences) functions.'

**Vasishta:** 'Is it possible for the 'innate tendencies' (*samskāra*) acquired over years to evaporate just like that?'

**Shiva:** Why not ? Though a person had been seeing only one moon in the sky for several years, does he not experience seeing two moons as soon as a defect crops up in the eye? There is nothing new in an older experience, though strong, disappearing in a few seconds when faced with contradicting innate tendencies. Similarly by cultivating strong non-dual thinking, the long-standing dualistic worldview will dissolve. By cultivating non-doership, the self-imposed tendency of claiming 'doership' for his actions will vanish.

'More importantly, however huge may be the world carved out by one's own thought processes, the world will disintegrate the very moment the thought ends ! Mentation implies activity of mind. It consumes energy and time.

Ending mentation does not require as much of an effort or time. Don't we notice the disappearance in a second of a long-drawn dream? A powerful and effortful thought creates the gross and enduring world. Negate the thought and the world dissolves in no time.'

**Vasishta:** 'The gist of what you say is that a man suffers endlessly in the world because of his forgetfulness about himself being the Brahman. Recollection of himself being Brahman through a mental drill of listening (to scriptures), reflection (on what is heard) and contemplation (on what is inferred) will free him from the cycle of births and deaths. Forgetfulness is a mental activity. Recollection is another mental activity. How can you establish that 'recollection' is more powerful and will win over forgetfulness ?'

**Shiva:** 'The state of Brahman comes as a forceful flood through the mental workout of listening etc. Hence it is quite robust. It can end forgetfulness. Does not a high-pitched note absorb the lower notes ?

**अहमेकोऽहमात्मास्मीत्येकां भावय भावनाम् ।**
**तया भावनया युक्तः स एव त्वं भवस्यलम् ।।**

*ahameko'hamātmāsmītyekāṃ bhāvaya bhāvanām* |
*tayā bhāvanayā yuktaḥ sa eva tvaṃ bhavasyalam* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 33, Sloka 49

'Keep in mind the single thought 'I am One. There is no second. I am the Supreme Brahman.' If it is strong, you do become Brahman. This is an inner worship. The triad of a worshipper-worshipping-worshipped (a deity) does not befit you.

'When you worship in this fashion, two types of worldviews are possible. One is 'Viewpoint from the position of the Substratum.' The other is 'Viewpoint from the position of Negation.' The world is seen as True in the former. The world is considered to be unreal in the latter.

'Having no link to any of those worldviews, Blemishless Pure Consciousness-Self is

free of words like truth and falsehood.'

**24. Three Steps**

'I shall spell out a few guidelines (steps) to establish you firmly in the Blemishless Pure Consciousness-Self.

'When the mind is annulled through an understanding of the essence of Truth, the world gets annihilated. An individual who is in this condition like a burnt seed is called '*Iti* (Thus)'.

This is the first step.

**भृष्टबीजोपमा सत्ता जीवस्य इतिनामिका ।**

*bhṛṣṭabījopamā sattā jīvasya itināmikā* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 34, Sloka 8

[**Note:** The commentator (Shri ABS) interpreted the word '*iti*' as '*swapiti*' based on Chandogyopanishad. '*Swapiti*' is derived as *swam* + *api* + *iti* in Ch. Up. Because *iti* is the primary word in this derivation, Shri ABS held the view that *iti* had to be given the meaning of *swapiti* in the above verse. He fortified his argument based on Swetaswatara and Katha Upanishads. The meaning given by Shri ABS looks reasonable since any alternative seems to be unavailable.

Chandogyopanishad explains the meaning of *Swam* + *api* + *iti* as 'very much absorbed within one's own self' indicative of 'the state of deep sleep'. We may understand that Lord Shiva too used this term to denote clear attainment of original form.]

**Shiva:** 'Another name for this phase is 'Stage of Seer.'

**पश्यन्ती नाम कलितोत्सृजन्ती चेत्यचर्वणाम् ।**

*paśyantī nāma kalitotsṛjantī cetyacarvaṇām* |

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 34, Sloka 9

'The seeker abandons recollection of what is seen again and again. He will stay as a Potent- Looker (*drik*). This step is referred to as "Seer". It is also called the stage of Deep Sleep.

**अपुनर्भवसौषुप्तपदपाण्डित्यपीवरी ।**

*apunarbhavasauṣuptapadapāṇḍityapīvarī* |

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 34, Sloka 11

'This is a stage where the seeker is not awake once again, is happy in deep sleep.

Hence the name. The wisdom required in this stage is available in plenty in the form of self-luminosity. An individual who reaches this stage will rest in supreme bliss.
'Let me now talk about the second step.

A seeker in the second stage is completely free of thoughts and counter thoughts as a result of constant practice. He will be neither sentient nor insentient and will remain in a self-luminous condition indescribable to words.

**तुर्यतुर्यांशकलितामकलङ्कामनामयाम् ।**

*turyaturyāṃśakalitāmakalaṅkāmanāmayām* |

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 34, Sloka 17

'This stage is the fourth state beyond the three states of wakefulness, deep sleep and dreams. It is also the fourth state beyond Virat, Hiranyagarbha and **अव्याक्रुत** *avyākruta*. It is known as The Turiya Step. The Turiya step can be reached through Deep Meditation with a one-pointed mind (**सम्प्रज्ञात समाधि** *samprajnāta samādhi*).

'Next comes the third step. The infinite omnipresent mental modifications merge completely in the Supreme Brahman like water admixed in milk. Any distinction between the two words - an individual (*jīvātma*) and the Brahman – is completely lost.

Such a state, beyond the six types of modifications, everlasting, not tainted by nescience will be fully liberating. This is the step transcending Turiya**. I am unable to express it in words. This is the last, Fourth in Fourth, state of chanting Aum.

[**Note:** ** The commentator Shri ABS adds: This state is obtained from **असंप्रज्ञात समाधि** *asaṃprajñāta samādhi* (Deep Meditation with Null mind). Aum comprises the four parts of 'a', 'u', 'm' and the half note. These four are also called Virat, Hiranyagarbha, Avyakta and Pure Consciousness states. The half note signifies the state when the sounds of a, u and m are not any more clearly audible and an inaudible sound remains (*varNaanam asphuta avastha*). It is also called '*Tanmatra*.' The fourth part of Aum sound, *tanamatra*, has further four constituents in it. They are: the sound, dot, energy and serenity. Serenity is the fourth constituent within the fourth part. It corresponds to the fourth stage **अविकल्प** *avikalpa* of the four stages - **ओत , अनुज्ञात्रि अनुज्ञात and अविकल्प** *ota , anujñātri anujñāta and avikalpa* - described in *ṇṛisimha uttara tapinii Upanishad*.]

**ओमित्यस्य च तन्मात्रातुर्या सा परमा गतिः ।।**

*omityasya ca tanmātrāturyā sā paramā gatiḥ* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 34, Sloka 30

'Oh, Great Sage, May you remain in that stage!'

**Vasishta:** "Rama! Blessing me thus, Lord Shiva was absorbed in the fourth of the fourth stage. His state was so powerful that under its influence myself and his cohorts, who were around, forgot ourselves and remained like statues for a while. Lord Shiva awoke from this state soon because of his affection for me and addressed as follows looking at me with compassionate eyes:

**Shiva**:

मुने मननमाहूय स्वसत्तैवाशु मीयताम् ।
त्वमर्थं माहरानर्थं पवनः स्पन्दतामिव ।।

*mune mananamāhūya svasattaivāśu mīyatām* |
*tvamarthaṃ māharānarthaṃ pavanaḥ spandatāmiva* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 35, Sloka 3

'Oh, Saint! Reflect deeply. Adore yourself by yourself. Let not the 'you-thought' come by. Such a thought is destructive. If you get it, you will face the same consequences that wind has to face by inviting movement. If there is a movement, then it is wind. Without movement, it is Supreme Brahman.

If there is a 'you-thought', a 'me-thought' becomes the individual (*jīva*). In the absence of you-thought, 'I' that remains is Supreme Brahman. Stay forever in that state!

'In case you get a thought of an external 'other', get back to the state of 'Self' through listening (to scriptures), reflection (on what is heard) etc. Our body is like a machine. When life-force enters it, it is able to move. With life-force gone, it is morbid and dead.

Though the strength to move comes from the life-breath, it (life-force) does not have the sensitivity to know about its entry or exit from the body. This capability lies with Pure Consciousness.

'Life-breath responsible for mobility eventually ceases to exist. Then the body which provided a base to that power of mobility will also die. But Consciousness that has the sensitivity (to detect the entry or exit of life-force) will never be annihilated. It stays attached to the subtle body. Though Consciousness exists universally, its sentience is not explicitly visible ubiquitously. Just as light gets reflected where there is a mirror, Consciousness reveals itself in the subtle body and lets its beingness known. The same Consciousness flowing out through intellect, sensory organs etc. shows external things like the trees and rocks.'

[**Note:** These issues were discussed in detail in the Chapter on Behavior of an Aspirant (Book 2 - Mumukshu Vyavahara Prakarana) under the section, Pratyaksha Pramana (Direct Cognizance)]

**25. Rudreswara**

'But if Supreme Brahman enters a 'wave of intellect' (बुद्धि व्रित्ति *buddhi vritti* , the wave assumes the form of Brahman. Then the stain of illusion existing in the wave will be washed out. Elders gave different names as Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, Indra, Hiranyagarbha, fire, wind, sun, and so on to denote the various stages of expression of Pure Consciousness through the wave of intellect.

स हरिः स शिवः सोऽजः स ब्रह्मा स सुरेश्वरः ।।

*sa hariḥ sa śivaḥ so'jaḥ sa brahmā sa sureśvaraḥ* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 35, Sloka 14

'Every one of them, Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma and so on had witnessed the omnipresent Pure Consciousness. None of them are subjected to illusory perceptions or misapprehensions. Even so, they go along with their responsibilities in creation, sustenance and dissolution, attaching themselves to one or the other of the three *gunas*. Thus they are like droplets of water in an ocean.

'Please do not be under the impression that I have come back to a state of fragmentation from that of oneness. I have described the above from a transactional viewpoint. If viewed from the position of the Absolute, there is no creation, nor any jobs to be done in a creation, nor are there any office-bearers like Brahma, Rudra and others. It is a net cast by nescience repeatedly.

**ततस्तस्या अनन्तायाः प्रसृतायाः पुनःपुनः**
**संपन्नदेशकालायाः क्रमः स्याद्वर्णनासु कः**

*tatastasyā anantāyāḥ prasṛtāyāḥ punaḥpunaḥ* ||
*saṃpannadeśakālāyāḥ kramaḥ syādvarṇanāsu kaḥ* |

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 35, Sloka 20

'There is no specific sequence to describe the idiosyncrasies of nescience which again and again casts its net of illusion, invents space-time variations by itself and comes up with different creations. How can any one say which individual came first and who is later in such a scenario?

'Irrespective of the number of creations, the source for all Brahmas, Vishnus, Shivas and others is Pure Consciousness. Pure Consciousness is the Supreme God. If you desire to worship, better worship Him only. It is He who gives 'beingness' to all creatures in a creation. He permeates all. He is omniscient. Therefore, you do not need any invocations, votive offerings, services, mantras, censers and other paraphernalia. Just contemplate on Him. That itself is worship. Getting absorbed in him is worship. Whatever substance you may look at, he shows Himself in that. Hence, Oh, Saint,

**आद्यं पूज्यं नमस्कार्यं स्तुत्यमर्घ्यं सुरेश्वरम्**
**एनं तं विद्धि वेद्यानां सीमान्तं महतामपि**

*ādyaṃ pūjyaṃ namaskāryaṃ stutyamarghyaṃ sureśvaram*
*enaṃ taṃ viddhi vedyānāṃ sīmāntaṃ mahatāmapi*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 35, Sloka 26

'He is the beginning, the middle and the culmination for all those that deserve to be worshipped. Worship Him alone!

'He, the essence of Truth, Pure Consciousness, Beingness is only experienced. He is also called "Rudreshwar." He is the root cause for the genesis of the universe. He lives in

every visible thing. Still He is not touched by anything. He transcends all.

'Though there is no true beingness in any of the mundane things, the objects acquire beingness because of His subtle presence within them. There is no magical phenomenon that does not bloom out of Him. What changes a grain into cooked food is his power.

His power transforms the same seed as a flower and spreads its fragrance to all. It is He alone who can withdraw these powers. The Inexorable Law of Nature, in which the powers of creation (**प्रवृत्ति** *pravritti*) and the powers of negation (**निवृत्ति** *nivritti*) are vested, is dependent on Him. 'We can work in the house during nights only in the presence of a lighted lamp. But the lamp remains a mute witness and it is not the doer of any of the works. Lord Shiva too stays as mere witness to what goes on as per the Laws of Nature.'

**Vasishta:** 'My Lord! How many types of powers are there with Shiva? How do they work? When so many things go on because of Him, how could He remain as a mere witness?'

**Shiva:** 'My Dear! Infinite indeed are the powers of the Supreme Lord who is Unlimited and is Pure Consciousness. How much can one talk of His powers?'

**Vasishta:** 'Where did He get these powers ? How could there be so many? If these powers are of varied nature, how could all of them have one common source? If they originated out of one cause, how can we differentiate them?'

**Shiva:** 'My Son!

**यैषा परपराभासा सैषा नियतिरुच्यते ।**
**क्रियाथ कृतिरिच्छा वा कालेत्यादिकृताभिधा ।।**

*yaiṣā paraparābhāsā saiṣā niyatirucyate* |
*kriyātha kṛtiricchā vā kāletyādikṛtābhidhā* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 37, Sloka 21

'The Inexorable Law of Nature is just another name for the illusion spun by Ishwar. There are two types within it – the Higher (*parā niyati*) and the Lower (*aparā niyati*). The higher Law of Nature is operative during the entire life-period of Hiranyagarbha. The additional set of operative laws specific to each creation is the lower Law, also labeled as Ishwar's Doing, Ishwar's Effort or Ishwar's Desire. Some people call it as 'Time.' There are many other names. As all of this is nothing more than the play of illusion, Ishwar is the only one witness for it. Hence he is neither separate from the illusion nor associated with it.'

**26. External Worship**

**Shiva:** 'Hence, Vasishta, you should worship Lord Ishwar. You should adore him internally and externally too. I shall now state how the external worship is to be carried out.

'First and foremost, you have to cleanse your body before embarking on the worship. Then make a strong effort to contemplate on Ishwar with a focused mind and from this strength transcend the consciousness of your body. Truly speaking, contemplation is the real worship. So I shall say more about it.

'Do not think that Ishwar is a limited idol. Nor should you imagine Him to be a tall hefty person. Think of him as an amalgamation of the brightness of a hundred million suns.

Imagine Him to be spread infinitely everywhere in space. Consider that Brahma, Indra, Vishnu, Rudra and others are part of His body. Think that all creatures are hairs on His body. Regard that powers like desire, knowledge, action etc. are embedded in Him.

'Contemplate on Him to be present equally in all the creatures. Know that He exists in every hill or valley, in every pebble or spring, in all men and demons. Feel that He is the substratum of beingness from which all forms like Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, Indra, Kubera, Yama and others emanate. Think that time, the source of creation, sustenance and dissolution, is His gatekeeper.

'Contemplate Him to be thousand-headed, thousand footed and thousand-eyed as described in Purusha Sukta**. Do you know what it signifies? Heads of all creatures in the world are his. All hands are His. All legs are His. Thinking capability in this world is His. Capacity to move is His. Hearing ability in the world belongs to Him.

Every ability and strength belongs to him. He does everything. Nevertheless, he does not have any intentions ! Go on contemplating on Him thus without a break. This is true meditation. After spending some time in such meditation, you may carry out other ritualistic services.

(**Note:** **Purusha Sukta -A set of hymns that appear in Rigveda and Yajurveda. They deal with the Essence of Truth related to The Supreme Self, Purusha. Purusha Sukta has a special position amongst all hymns and it is used in the worship of almost all deities. Amongst many other interesting factors related to the Supreme Self, this Sukta mentions that the entire visible and inferred world constitutes only an insignificant part of the Supreme Self. We may note that this statement is similar to the modern understanding of the Structure of the Universe which says that 96 percent of the universe is dark to science).
'Because this God is of the form of knowledge, external services like lighting a lamp, incense, votive offerings are unnecessary. He is contemplated as Virat in the form of Self-Knowledge. Such a meditation is the holy water, food and other offerings to Him.

'Even if a person has not been able to experientially realize the essence of truth, and is still at a beginning stage, if he performs such a contemplation just for thirteen minutes*, he gets the merit equivalent to giving a cow in alms. He earns a merit equivalent to that of performing the ritual of Aswamedha (a large sacrificial rite using a horse) if he contemplates for a hundred minutes*. He receives the equivalent merit of performing a thousand Aswamedhas if he continues with this contemplation for half a '*ghatika*'*. Meditating thus for one whole *ghatika**, he will obtain the merit equivalent to the Sacrificial rite of Rajasuya. If he does it for half a daytime*, he receives the merit equivalent to 100,000 Rajasuyas. If he can contemplate for the whole daytime, the seeker will be absorbed in the essence of the Supreme Truth.'

[**Note:** * : The time scale division of a 'minute*' referred to above does not correspond to that of the commonly followed British time scale of 1 over 60th of an hour. The minute* is of the duration of a 'blink'. A blink is equivalent to about one twenty fourth of the standard second. Thirteen minutes* equals approximately half a second. A hundred such minutes* equal to about four standard seconds. Half of a *ghatika* is about 12 normal minutes. Half a daytime refers to six hours. We can appreciate from the small durations of practice stipulated above, how powerful and effective this type of meditation is!]

**27. Internal Worship**

**Shiva:** 'An unbroken stream of internal contemplation on Shiva sitting, standing, walking, sleeping or doing anything constitutes Internal worship. It does not have any restrictions or prescribed procedures. What does it refer to when we say Shiva? Shiva is the pure consciousness inside the body. His very presence bestows cognitive capability to the senses. It is He who contacts what is to be contacted and avoids what is to be avoided. He is the one who experiences happiness or sorrow or rejects them.

**देहलिङ्गेषु शान्तस्थं त्यक्तलिङ्गान्तरादिकम् ।**
**यथाप्राप्तार्थसंवित्त्या बोधलिङ्गं प्रपूजयेत् ।।**

*dehaliṅgeṣu śāntasthaṃ tyaktaliṅgāntarādikam* |
*yathāprāptārthasaṃvittyā bodhaliṅgaṃ prapūjayet* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 39, Sloka 6

'The body appears to be a symbol (in an oval shape) of Shiva when seated stable and erect in a lotus pose with folded hands held together in the gesture of Namashkar (Indian way of saluting). If you wish to worship this symbolic form of Shiva, you do not need any external symbols or idols. Your body itself is His symbol for you.

There is one symbol of knowledge inside your body. It provides you the capacity to perceive diverse objects. While perceptions of objects may keep shifting, the root consciousness cognizing the perceptions does not vary and is constant. This Consciousness-Knowledge is the true symbol of Shiva. Venerate this symbol!

**प्रवाहपतितार्थस्थः स्वबोधस्नानशुद्धिमान् ।**
**नित्यावबोधार्हणया बोधलिङ्गं प्रपूजयेत् ।।**

*pravāhapatitārthasthaḥ svabodhasnānaśuddhimān* |
*nityāvabodhārhaṇayā bodhaliṅgaṃ prapūjayet* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 39, Sloka 7

'Uninterrupted cognition of the root consciousness that gives sensibility to your senses is the only way you worship the consciousness-knowledge symbol. Suppose such cognition is broken and you are swept away in the flood of information generated by the senses. You have to take steps to remedy the situation then. You have to bathe yourself in the knowledge which helps you in re-cognizing your true Self. You will be sanctified by such a bath. Soon you will begin to focus on the consciousness-knowledge symbol. It means that adoration of the knowledge symbol (*linga pūja)* has resumed.

'Yet sometimes the mind may get into a sort of inertia (*tamas*) as the worship of knowledge- consciousness proceeds unbrokenly. (Inertia means either sleep or a dull state of sluggishness.) In those times, imagine yourself to be a brilliantly shining mid-day solar disc within your heart space as well as outside in the external space. Sometimes the mind feels a bit melancholic for no reason. Think in those times that you are shining like a Full moon emitting moonlight.

'When you purify your inner self thus:

1. You will be able to cognize the Potent Knower (*samvit*) permeating in everything

perceived by your senses. The all-permeating Potent Knower (*samvit*) is the symbol of Shiva (*Shiva linga*).

2. You will cognize the consciousness flowing from your senses towards the object in the world. That consciousness in the form of life-force is the symbol of Shiva.

'Merge the information collected through the senses with the quintessence bliss within you. Harness the horses - life-force and mind - to your life-breath and travel inward. You will witness Shiva as Pure Consciousness concealed within your heart space.

'Shiva as Pure Consciousness is the one who perceives all the percepts. He is the one who knows everything to be known. He is the agency for all actions. He is the experiencer of all experiences. He is the one who recalls different memories. He is the one who recognizes the existence of your senses. He is the cognizer of the presence and absence of substances. He is all pervading and much more luminous than the sun and moon that shine with fallacious brightness. So revere only such a God !

'What more can I speak of Shiva? He has got everything and at the same time has nothing. He is in your body; yet he pervades the entire space. Untouched by any, he is in contact with all. He is the changing knowledge detected by the senses and also the unchanging eternal Knowledge. He is the power behind thoughts of the mind. He is also the pure energy that lies in-between life-breath (*prāna) and apāna* wind. He is the place of Khechari posture bound by heart, throat and cheeks. He is the Lord of the Ajna chakra (corresponds to cavernous plexus) lying between the two eyebrows and stem of the nose. He is the crowning glory at the end of the thirty-six truths spoken by the Shaivites. He is beyond the Unmani Yoga (Path Unaffectedness) talked about by Shiva Yogis. He bestows the mind with the ability to sense percepts. It is he who wakes up the mind and sets it off towards the manifested manifold. He is evenly spread in both *Savikalpa* (with ideas) and *Nirvikalpa* (without thoughts) *sāmadhi*. He is solidly behind the speech that comes out as articulated word or the speech that exists in a latent form within the innate tendencies.

'Vasishta! How many things can I narrate? He is the substratum for all the superimposed appearances. He also happens to be the enjoyer of the world forgetting himself! He is the one who assumes, accepting duality, all forms. As a matter of fact, whatever may be the form - a limb, a body, a creature or a thought – take it to be Shiva and meditate on it.

'Vasishta! I am that Shiva! A large variety of powers worship me in diverse ways. But I forsake all of them and exist in limitless and perfect form. There is no death for one who understands the quintessence of my being. He will not be reborn. He is free of the pairs of sorrow and happiness. He wouldn't be angry any more. He will neither be satisfied nor dissatisfied. He will not be agitated. He will have no desires. Nor will he reject anything. His worship is unbroken. It continues as long as he lives with a body because what keeps his body alive and moving is Consciousness. His God is that Consciousness. Every other thing is a votive object. Therefore, he worships with whatever material is available. One who comes to this level of worship should not run in search of votive materials. Keeping consumption at just about subsistence level required for the maintenance of the body, he should continue with the worship without getting involved with any other kinds of deeds.

'Even if heavens fall or a deluge of misfortunes visits, or an aggressor invades the country or even if the mind is overcome by feelings of attachment, hatred, pleasures etc., he should not give up adoring Shiva under any circumstances.

**28. Practice of Detachment**

**Shiva**: 'A seeker should keep himself away from mundane matters as far as possible, discard pursuit of pleasure, cultivate qualities like love, compassion, reticence, indifference which are approved by yoga scriptures and be absorbed in detachment. He should continue to worship Self as a form of veneration to Shiva. If there is a problem in complete detachment, he may continue the worship with minimum possible consumption of the non-prohibited items. Worship should be carried on with tolerance towards the factors that are behind the pairs of opposites like happiness and misery etc., while continuously developing detachment and obliterating 'mine - thine' separation. Renunciation is very complex:

**अनीहितं परित्यज्य परित्यज्य तथेहितम् ।**
**उभयाश्रयणेनापि नित्यमात्मानमर्चयेत् ।।**

*anīhitaṃ parityajya parityajya tathehitam* |
*ubhayāśrayaṇenāpi nityamātmānamarcayet* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 39, Sloka 50

'When you give up a thing that is not required, relinquish it with a sense that it is an illusion. When you accept a thing that is required, think that it represents your Self but do not entertain the feeling that it is being received. Thus you leave both – what is needed and what is not necessary. This is one way to renounce things.

'Alternately, what you need and also what you do not need being illusory objects, you may reject them understanding that both are non-existent. Or, both things being merely a form of Self, you can sacrifice both because it is not possible for you to receive your own Self. The true Worship of Self as Shiva is to give up all things adopting one method or the other. Follow it up relentlessly. But keep in mind another thing: giving up too is a kind of experience. A constant struggle to reject things saying to yourself that 'I do not want this or I do not want that', you are experiencing that very same thing in a different way! Even that is to be avoided !

**न वाञ्छता न त्यजता दैवप्राप्ताः स्वभावतः ।**
**सरितः सागरेणेव भोक्तव्या भोगभूमयः ।।**

*na vāñchatā na tyajatā daivaprāptāḥ svabhāvataḥ* |
*saritaḥ sāgareṇeva bhoktavyā bhogabhūmayaḥ* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 39, Sloka 51

'Certain events befall on you effortlessly like rivers flowing into the sea, without your wish or a desire for them simply because of destiny. Those events could be a cause for happiness or sorrow. You should not yearn for any of those. Nor should you reject them. Sometimes they may wane away by themselves. But you should not look forward for their decline or increase. Just as the ocean experiences the confluence of rivers, experience all

things in the world as they come without clinging to them or rejecting them.

'Do not get aroused when good or bad things happen. Worship of Shiva is essentially melding the mind with Self with equanimity towards all things.

**देशकालकरणक्रमोदितैः सर्ववस्तुसुखदुःखविभ्रमैः ।**
**नित्यमर्चय शरीरनायकं तिष्ठ शान्तसकलेहया धिया ।।**

*Deśakālakaraṇakramoditaiḥ sarvavastusukhaduḥkhavibhramaiḥ |*
*nityamarcaya śarīranāyakaṃ tiṣṭha śāntasakalehayā dhiyā ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 39, Sloka 63

'Time, space, Sadhana chatustaya sampatti (Fourfold Aids of seeking Truth – see glossary) are one set. Happiness, misery and upsets arising out of the first set is another set. But every one of these are flowers for offering only if and if all kinds of thoughts in your mind (preferring one and avoiding other) are emaciated and calmed down.

Vasishta ! Worship Shiva, the Lord, the prime mover of your body, with all those flowers with a quiet mind. This is the prime way of venerating Shiva."

[**Note:** The 39th Sarga comprises a host of gems of advice to earnest seekers on attainment of detachment (*vairagya*). We will be able to understand the full import of the verses therein only when we notice the lifestyle of yogis who achieved detachment.

Even after having spoken so much and for so long, Shiva continues his teaching into the next Sarga too. A question comes as to why the 39th Sarga was closed at this point if Shiva's speech were to continue into the next Sarga. Dualism exists as the backdrop within the procedure of worship described in the 39th Sarga. The guidelines are based on a differentiation of the worshipper, worshipping and the worshipped. But the essence of the Truth of Shiva would not be conveyed unless and until the above differentiation is eliminated fully. Shiva's teaching is resumed in the next Sarga with this theme of worship where the triad (*triputi*) is not operational. Sage Valmiki has begun a new Sarga in order to highlight this difference in Shiva's teaching.]

**Shiva:**

**यथाकालं यथारम्भं न करोषि करोषि यत् ।**
**चिन्मात्रस्य शिवस्यान्तस्तदेवार्चनमात्मनः ।।**

*yathākālaṃ yathārambhaṃ na karoṣi karoṣi yat |*
*cinmātrasya śivasyāntastadevārcanamātmanaḥ ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 40, Sloka 1

'Vasishta! All actions you undertake or not, as per your convenience and the demands of the prevailing circumstances, constitute your internal adoration of Shiva as your Self.

'You may say that men take actions depending on their likes and dislikes and hence their actions will always be of an ulterior nature. Therefore, they are unfit to be offered to Shiva as flowers. But you need not entertain such a doubt. Pairs of opposites such as likes and dislikes are not separate from Shiva. The sparks emanating from fire are not different from

the fire. In a similar manner, the entire world beginning from space develops from Self. Hence no substance, no concept is different from Self. If you look from this point of view, the triad - the distinction that I am the worshipper, Shiva is being worshipped and I am performing the worship – will vanish.

'We give initiation into other methods of worship or knowledge only to those people who cannot escape the triad. There is no specific way to impart a teaching to knowledgeable people who crossed the triad. Adopt the viewpoint of the knowledgeable. You will not then be tainted by illusory phenomena. You will be like a transparent crystal which is not affected by the colors of a flower that sits beside it.'

**Vasishta:** 'Master! You say that there is no difference between the worshipper and the worshipped. How then did the name Shiva come? A name originates depending on its attributes. You call him the Supreme Brahman. You identify Him as Self. You refer to Him as the Supreme Self. You give one name or other. You also say He is none of these. You say He is nothingness. You label him Knowledge. How can you describe Him in so many different ways if there is no dissimilarity at all? It could be that these names signify different attributes. Otherwise, why would you use so many names?'

**Shiva:** 'There is a True Substance that has no beginning or end or form or attributes. That substance is not accessible to the senses. Unless you can grasp a thing by your senses, how can you possibly christen it with a name? Why do we need to discuss names given to something that cannot be cognized by you?'

**29. Pure Sattvic Mind Wave**

**Vasishta:** 'If That True Substance is beyond the reach of senses and mind (and hence not comprehensible), how can one understand it even after your instruction? What is the purpose of teaching about something that is impossible to comprehend?'

**Shiva:** 'Look, there are a few smudges on a white cloth. What is a smudge? A foreign material (that is not cloth) is stuck to the cloth. Therefore, it is called a stain. In order to remove the stain, you wash with another foreign material (a chemical which is not cloth). Because of the second foreign material the first one is removed. The cloth remains clean as it originally was. You call this whole process as 'Washing of Clothes.' Likewise, the blemish called 'veil of ignorance' affected you. As an effect of our teaching, a new blemish titled 'pure *sattvic* mentation' has taken root in you. Wash with this the earlier blemish 'veil of nescience'. By this process, both the blemishes – veil of nescience and pure *sattvic* mentation – will be washed away! You shine as you truly were. In other words, the self-luminous Supreme Brahman shines in His pristine brilliance. Your senses or intellect have no role in this brilliance.'

**Vasishta:** 'What is 'Pure Sattvic Mentation'?'

**Shiva:** 'Due to the meritorious deeds performed in the past births, your mind attains virtues like abandonment of desires (*shama*) and restraint on external functioning of organs (*dama*). Mental modification under such virtues is called 'pure *sattvic* mentation'. Instructions of a Guru, association with noble people, and reflection on scriptures are parts of nescience that add on to this mentation. Listening to scriptures, reflection on what is heard and contemplation help in brushing out the dirt. With this, the *sattvic* qualities and the parts of ignorance (association of noble people etc.) are rinsed away simultaneously like in the washing metaphor we mentioned. That's what I hinted at earlier.'

**Vasishta:** 'Does it not amount to saying that the instructions of a Guru are of no use?'

**Shiva:** 'How can you say that? When you admit of differences amongst Guru, Sastra etc., then they cannot be a part of the Supreme Brahman. But I did not declare them to be of no purpose. A lady wearing a gold necklace forgets that she is wearing it and looks for it all over the house. After a time, an outsider comes along and says that the necklace has been there all the time on her body. She felt so happy that she could get back her necklace as if it was really lost and found! Did the second person find a necklace that was lost and gave it to her? No, he didn't. Still he was the cause for the redemption of her sorrow.

Though he was the reason for the amelioration of her misery (by pointing out that the necklace was with her only), there is no further need for him once the knowledge that the necklace had never been lost was obtained. In the same way, a Guru, Guru's instructions etc. are of temporary utility. They are required for that limited purpose. Once Self-Knowledge is obtained, no distinctions remain. Therefore, such things do not have an existence at that stage.'

**Vasishta:** 'The Supreme Brahman has been in existence and He continues to exist. No differences exist in Him. But we see the world with so many vast differences. Why is this so?'

**Shiva:** 'Vasishta! I told you about it previously. It is like a castle in the air (*Gandhrwa nagara*). A dream empire. Mind is the reason for its build up.'

**Vasishta:** 'My Lord, you did talk about it. And I did understand. Agreed. Yet the world does not disappear. Nor does the misery go away. I feel Knowledge alone is inadequate and there has to be some other technique for an everlasting cure of the sorrow. Please let me know.'

**Shiva:** 'Vasishta, there is no other or higher technique. It is not enough if your understanding about the illusory nature of the world remains merely at an intellectual level. You should continue to strengthen the knowledge you gained about the phenomenal nature of the world until the impressions stored in your mind are totally annihilated. The main cause for the genesis of the imaginary world is the 'stored impressions'. True Knowledge is the one that is obtained when the impressions are completely destroyed.'

**Vasishta:** 'The Supreme Self who is Pure Consciousness must have been without any impressions to start with. How did he become an individual for the first time with an imaginary body?'

**Shiva:** 'The first imagination of Hiranyagarbha was the cause for it.'

[**Note:** This point was discussed elaborately in the 38th and later Sargas of the Chapter on Sustenance , Sthiti Prakarana.]

**Vasishta:** 'In other words, the worldly objects do not possess any 'existence' of their own and are dependent on the existence of Brahman for their 'beingness'. Why not we assume that the worldly objects do possess their own beingness?'

**Shiva:** 'If they did have a true beingness of their own, the calming down of the world would

not have happened for individuals like me with the direct experience of the Supreme Self.

**अनुभवकलनामृतेऽस्य माता भवति न सर्वविकल्पनेष्वसत्सु ।**
**फलदुरुविभवा प्रमाणमाला स्थितिमुपयाति न वारिणीव वह्निः ।।**

*anubhavakalanāmṛte'sya mātā bhavati na sarvavikalpaneṣvasatsu |*
*phaladuruvibhavā pramāṇamālā sthitimupayāti na vāriṇīva vahniḥ ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 42, Sloka 29

'Because all the visible objects are unreal modifications, the instruments of cognition subside at the time experiencing Supreme Self like a speck of fire fallen into water. There is no way of cognizing the Self other than actually experiencing the Self.'

**Vasishta:** "Rama! With those words of the Lord, there were no doubts left in me. I remained silent. Observing me to be quiet, Shiva blessed me saying "Oh, the Silent One! May everything be auspicious for you!" He asked his consort, Parvati, to get ready to leave. Hearing that, I readied myself to offer flowers at his feet with devotion. Even before I could do so, He left by celestial path.

"I ruminated over His words and contemplated intensely on His teachings. Having purified my mind, I achieved control of inner organs. Since then, I have been continuously performing the worship of Self as per his instructions. With this kind of worship that does not involve material objects, I am able to spend my days without any sorrow, though I have been carrying out so many chores for eons of time.

"Whatever thoughts arise or whatever jobs I have to do, I consider them as my votive flowers. I perform my worship of Self with those flowers. This worship may seem to be absent during deep sleep (*suśupti*). As a matter of fact, the worship has no break even in deep sleep. The three thoughts that 'I slept well, I did not know anything during deep sleep and I was happy during the deep sleep' are associated with deep sleep. I conduct my worship of Self in the form of Shiva using those thoughts (*chitta vritti*) as flowers of offering. Hence there is no interruption for my worship of Shiva even during deep sleep."

**Rama:** "Sir, such a combination of three thoughts occurs even to an ordinary person. What is so special about you?"

**Vasishta:** "The ordinary folk work with a motive, they lack agenda-free action. I do not have any of my own agenda. Agenda-free action means acting with disinterest. Disinterest does not mean doing a bad job. It means disinterest in the result. Therefore, Rama, engage in the world without an agenda of your own but with detachment and desirelessness. You will not then be affected by sorrow.

"You should be firmly convinced that the world is '*tucha*', a phantasm. *Tucha* refers to false appearance like water in a mirage. In case you cannot abide in such a conviction, feel that the entire world is none other than yourself.

**त्वमिहासि जगद्रूपं चिन्मात्रविततताकृते ।**
**निजावयवकावृत्तौ कः क्रमो हर्षशोकयोः ।।**

*tvamihāsi jagadrūpaṃ cinmātravitatākṛte |*
*nijāvayavakāvṛttau kaḥ kramo harṣaśokayoḥ ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 43, Sloka 15

"Because you are not different from the perfect Self, you are the one who assumed the form of this world! The organs in your body are subjected to change every day. Do you feel happy or sad about that? Neither. Likewise, you need not feel either happy or sad about the changes that go on in the world, which is none other than your own form. Fully appreciating this fact, be absorbed in the worship of Self and stay unruffled like a calm ocean. Please do ask me if you have further questions."

**Rama:** "Revered Teacher! My doubts are dispelled. I am satisfied. I understand in my mind about Truth and unreality. My mind has achieved perfect happiness and I am in the Supreme state."

### 30. C*hitta and Sattva* (Mind and Realized residual Mind)

[**Note:** Though Rama expressed complete understanding, Sage Vasishta was not fully satisfied. He desired to verify Rama's understanding through a test check. Suppose a pole is fixed in the ground after digging a pit. Whether the pole is securely fixed or not is verified by giving a few jerks to the pole.

The jerks are not given for removing the pole but to make sure that it was really quite firmly fixed. In Sanskrit this is called the 'Doctrine of verification of pole-fixing' (*sthūnā nikhanana nyāya*). He, therefore, resumed his discourse on practices of detachment etc. in the 44th Sarga leading to the short fictitious story of Bilwa, the Stone Apple.]

**Vasishta:** "Rama! Ordinary folk normally go about their work using their organs, retaining in their mind agency (of doership) and an expectation of the results of their action. Consequently, they are subjected to happiness or sorrow. In contrast, it does not amount to doing any work, if you work with your organs without any attachment, keeping the mind on the 'now' without letting it wander into the past or future. Therefore, engage yourself totally in a detached state.

"I come back repeatedly to the same point because I am a bit apprehensive that you may forget this in some bad times and fall into the trap of egoism. You may say that there is no guarantee that you would not slip into claiming doership even after several repetitions. But it does not happen like that. Attaining the peak level of Self-Knowledge, he will not take birth again. I hope you reached such a high point in your knowledge.

**आशा यातु निराशत्वमभावं यातु भावनम् ।**
**अमनस्त्वं मनो यातु तवासङ्गेन जीवतः ।।**

*āśā yātu nirāśatvamabhāvaṃ yātu bhāvanam |*
*amanastvaṃ mano yātu tavāsaṅgena jīvataḥ ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 44, Sloka 10

"As you conduct your life in total detachment, May your wants turn our to be no-wants! May your thoughts be no-thoughts! May your mind be a no-mind!

"There will be no modification as the world when the oscillation of the mind ceases as a result of discarding the impressions from past lives, understanding the essence of Truth, and practice of breath control. The mind of such a Yogi is no more referred to as 'mind'. It will get the name *sattva*.

**ज्ञस्य चित्तं न चित्ताख्यं ज्ञचित्तं सत्त्वमुच्यते ।**
**नामार्थान्यत्वभाक्चित्तं बोधात्ताम्रसुवर्णवत् ।।**

*jñasya cittaṃ na cittākhyaṃ jñacittaṃ sattvamucyate |*
*nāmārthānyatvabhākcittaṃ bodhāttāmrasuvarṇavat ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 44, Sloka 30

"A mind that has attained *sattva* condition, will continue in the *Turiya* state for some time and then go beyond *Turiya*. There is neither mind nor world in the state beyond *Turiya*. In order that you may appreciate it fully, I shall narrate a short story, The Story of Bilwa, the Stone Apple."

**31. The Story of Bilwa (Stone Apple)**

(The Story of Bilwa was narrated in the 45th Sarga).

**Vasishta:** "Rama! Once upon a time there was a humongous Bilwa fruit (stone apple, Botanical name: *Aegle marmelos*). It was so colossal in its dimensions of height and width that other heavenly bodies in space in comparison looked like tiny specks. The fruit appeared to be fully ripe all the time. Nevertheless, it never fell down from the tree even after the passage of eons and eons of time. Nor did it dry up. Another peculiarity was that when any one including gods like Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and others searched for it, no one could locate the branch on which the fruit was hanging. What can one say about the seed of this fruit from which it originated? There was no evidence for the existence of a seed in the fruit. By merely looking at it, one experienced the sweetness of its juice, sweeter than the fruit of Supreme Bliss. There is no other fruit that resembles it in the entire creation.

"The Bilwa fruit cast a spell on itself and without leaving its enormity, it began to get teeny- weeny forms. Those tiny forms are the universes. The gross Bilwa fruit created space for ignorance within itself and generated a sense of 'me'. Because of that 'me', I-consciousness, separate and composite bodies gradually took shape within it. The Bilwa fruit began to identify itself with every shape that formed. It thought with each of the forms 'I am that, I am that.' Nevertheless, it did not lose its original form because the vast creation that appeared within it was no more than its own imagination. Spatial distinctions, time variations, nearness and farness, past and future and so on were part of its conceptions only.

"The enormous Bilwa fruit witnessed the vast variety of imaginations, modifications due to nescience. It understood that the manifested manifold was all due to the power of Consciousness. So it remained stable, happy and indifferent. As a matter of fact, it was itself One, Oneness as well as multitude."

(The 46th Sarga opens with a comment from Rama).

**Rama:** "Great Teacher, it appears to me that you described the 'beingness' of the Supreme Consciousness as the Bilwa fruit.

**32. The Story of Shila**

**Vasishta:** "Rama! What you have to particularly note is the fact that the Bilwa fruit did not evolve into various universes. If that is so, you would not have been able to see the fruit any more. Suppose we cut down a large mango tree and carve an elephant from the log. We can say that the wooden elephant is a modification of the mango tree. After the elephant is carved out, you will never be able to see the mango tree as it was.

"But the Bilwa fruit remains as it is even after the formation of millions and billions of universes. How is the world able to exist within it?

स्थिता सौषुप्तसौम्यान्तः शिलान्तःसंनिवेशवत् ।।

*sthitā sauṣuptasaumyāntaḥ śilāntaḥsaṃniveśavat* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 46, Sloka 5

"It exists like the feeling of 'happiness' in the state of deep sleep (*suśupti)*. It is like a sculptor's mental imagination of the panels of a marvelous story within a block of rock. In other words, the entire world originated as an illusion; it's just a mere concept.

[**Note:** Suppose a sculptor conceives to sculpt an entire story of, say, The Liberation of Gajendra in a huge block of rock. He mentally plans which figures should come up in which part of the rock before he begins the actual sculpting. The world emerges like the paring down of the various layers of the rock within his imagination. '*vivarta*' refers to the process of falsely imagining the existence of a form or a conceptual entity. We may notice that Sage Valmiki conveyed the sense without actually resorting to the use of the terms – conception (*vivarta*) and modification (*pariṇama*).]

"Rama, in order to elucidate the matter further, I shall relate another story, The Story of Shila. Once upon a time there was a huge batholithic rock at a place. It was quite massive. But it was incredibly soft to touch. Hundreds of lotuses could be seen clearly within it."

**Rama:** "Yes, Teacher, I did see such a stone at Saligrama (a place) when I was on a pilgrimage."

**Vasishta:** "Good. I never saw such a rock anywhere. The rock I am talking about contains the whole universe. If you analyze critically, there is nothing. It is called '*chichchila*'– derived from the combination of two Sanskrit words, *chit* and *shila*. It stands for Pure Consciousness. It is unique, It has no second.

"The moment a sculptor thinks of an 'elephant' in his mind, its form appears in the rock. If he thinks of a conch, the shape of a conch appears in the rock. When he conceives a wheel, a wheel comes up. Where does the wheel exist? It exists in the rock. Where is the rock? The rock is in his imagination! The creation of the universe in the rock of Consciousness too

works the same way! Whatever form you conceive, that particular form is generated. That is why Vedas declare that the entire world has its genesis in 'word.'

**स भूरिति व्याहरन् - भुवमस्रुजत**
**एत इति वै प्रजापतिर्देवानसृजत**
**अस्र्ग्रमिति मनुष्यानइन्दव इति पितरन**

*sa bhūriti vyāharan - bhuvamasrujata*
*eta iti vai prajāpatirdevānasṛjata*
*asrgramiti manuṣyāna{}indava iti pitarana*

"The creator created the earth by uttering the word '*bhuh*'. Saying '*ete*', he created gods, saying '*asrugram*', human beings, and uttering '*indavah*', the forefather gods.

**उक्त्या संपद्यते यच्च तल्लयेन विलीयते ।**
**ब्रह्मैवेदं विकारादि विकाराद्यर्थवर्जितम् ।।**

*uktyā saṃpadyate yacca tallayena vilīyate |*
*brahmaivedaṃ vikārādi vikārādyarthavarjitam ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 46, Sloka 28

"Rama! A substance that had its origin in a word will disappear if the word vanishes. Therefore, the world that was created by the word of the creator (Hiranyagarbha), dissolves with the word. What remains will be the Supreme Brahman without any modifications. Obviously then, even during the time they appear, all the modifications are He only."

**[Note:** Sage Vasishta summarizes the gist of the stories of Bilwa and Shila in the 47th Sarga. The content of the five Sargas from 47th to 52nd forms the curtain riser for the discourse coming up from the 52nd Sarga onwards. Sage Vasishta reveals the core of the Teaching that Sri Krishna would be imparting to Arjun in the next period (*yuga*) in the 52nd Sarga.]

**Vasishta:** "Rama, I told you two short stories. The stone apple contained a fleshy part, fiber and juice. I said that creation happened without any change in them. In the story of Shila (rock), I said that creation happened even in the absence of flesh, fiber and juice that were in the fruit. I shall give you yet another example.

"A peahen laid an egg. There is liquid (albumen or egg white) in the egg. There is no color to that liquid. After a certain period, the egg breaks open and from it emerges the peacock, its tail etc. as modification of the liquid. You see the seven colors in the tail. Where did the colors come from ? We have to admit that the colors originated from the egg white (liquid) in the egg. Further, the peacock tail has some soft parts and some hard parts like the quill and the feather shaft. Wherefrom did the hardness and softness emanate? Obviously they have come from the liquid in the egg. There is no other way. We have to agree that the liquid in the egg contains hidden within it, the softness and hardness, various colors etc. Thus viewed logically, the colors in the peacock tail are not different from the liquid. Similarly, the visible world is no different from the Supreme Brahman."

**Rama:** "Sir, you expected that I would presume that the Supreme Brahman and the world were distinct like the flesh and juice in the example of Bilwa fruit. Such a presumption on my part would lead to wrongly ascribing independent existence to the world. In order to avoid this possibility, you came up with the example of a peahen egg. But this analogy places the ever-existing Supreme Brahman and the non-existing world into the same box."

**Vasishta:** "We declared that the world is non-existing; we didn't say it was a void. Your objection will be valid only if 'Brahman is True and the world is a 'void'. But world is not emptiness. Just as the sunlight appears in desert as water (in a mirage), Brahman appears as the world. If you carefully look at, the water (in the mirage) will be seen as sunlight. To a knower of Truth, the world appears as Brahman. So there is no question of emptiness at any stage. Therefore, what I said does not amount to putting two opposites in the same box."

**Rama:** "Teacher! The Truth you refer to has a capacity to repeatedly germinate a world. In that Truth are Consciousness and insentience inseparably mixed like the colors within the albumen of an egg. Is this what you meant?"

[The 48th Sarga in summary.]

**Vasishta:** "No, No! The seeding capacity you mention is called Unmanifested (*avyākrita*). The Brahman I am talking about transcends that stage. The Unmanifested is also known as *māya śabala brahma* (Brahman with māya as His adjunct). I refer to the Pure Brahman beyond it. Only such individuals who reached the stage of *Sattva* in the Path of Yoga can witness this with clarity. There is no question of any divisions within Pure Brahman."

## 33. The Five Modes of the Origination of Effects

[The 49th Sarga in summary.]

**Rama:** "Sir! People talk of three types of differences. They are:

- Within the group differences. Example: a white cow amongst cows.
- Between the group differences. Example: cows vs. horses.
- Different parts within an individual. Example: different body parts in a cow such as its horns, eyes etc.

"This is also called the three way differentiation. On one hand you contend that the Supreme Brahman does not have any of the three types of differences. On the other hand you pronounce that the world possessing these three types of differences is visible in Brahman. In case the basic material does not hold these differences, how would they manifest in the world?"

**Vasishta:** "Rama! You seem to entertain this doubt because I casually said at one point in our discussions that the Supreme Brahman is the ultimate cause for the world. You will get clarity if you understand the ways by which an effect can take shape from its cause. There are five ways in which it can happen. They are:

1. Non-negated Prior Condition: (**अतिरोहित प्रगवस्थ** *atirohita pragavastha*).

A ball of clay is molded into a pot. The prior condition was a ball of clay. The latter state is a pot. Simply because it is in the form of a pot, the clayness of the pot has not gone. Clayness is not negated. This type of transformation of a cause into an effect is christened Non-negated prior condition

2. Inhibited Prior Condition: (**प्रतिबाध प्रगवस्थ** *pratibādha pragavastha*)
Water has become ice. You do not see any liquid water in ice. But we cannot deny water-quality in ice. We can only say that the water-quality has been inhibited. Therefore, this transformation is called Inhibited Prior Condition
.
3. Veiled Prior Condition: (**प्रच्छन्न प्रगवस्थ** *pracchanna pragavastha*)
A rope appears as a snake. The prior quality of ropiness is covered up. Therefore, it is called the Veiled Prior Condition .

4. Unveiled Prior Condition: (**अप्रच्चन्न प्रगवस्थ** *apraccanna pragavastha*)
Water has changed to a wave form. Though the form of a wave is seen, the original quality of water is also clearly seen. Therefore, this transformation is known as Unveiled Prior Condition .

5. Vanished Prior Condition: (**विनष्ट प्रगवस्थ** *vinaṣṭa pragavastha*)
Milk has curdled to yogurt. The prior condition of being milk is totally lost. Therefore, this transformation is named Vanished Prior Condition .

"An effect is produced in the world through one of the above five modes only. There is no other way. The last mode is also termed as evolution (**परिणाम** *pariṇāma*). It is also called manipulation. Another name is modification. The original substance is irrevocably changed. The first four are together called false appearances (**विवर्त** *vivarta*).

"Now please think it over according to which mode did the world originate from Supreme Brahman. The Supreme Brahman does not get modified either at the beginning or in the middle or at the end. We have to admit that the type of change is a false appearance. It is merely a phantasm. Hence, the world cannot touch Brahman."

**Rama:** "Simply because the world was not there from the beginning and it has come at a later intermediate time, how can we say that it does not cling to Brahman?"

**Vasishta:**

**यादृगाद्यन्तयोर्वस्तु तादृगेव तदुच्यते ।**
**मध्ये यस्य यदन्यत्वं तदबोधाद्विजृम्भितम् ।।**

*yādṛgādyantayorvastu tādṛgeva taducyate* |
*madhye yasya yadanyatvaṃ tadabodhādvijṛmbhitam* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 49, Sloka 7

"Have a close look. If a substance appears to be the same in the beginning and also at the end but looks modified in-between, the modification so observed would be due to ignorance only. Such a modification can never affect the substratum. Mistaking a rope to be a snake and similar other things are the examples one can readily cite. That is the reason we declare that Brahman is without a second and is immutable."

**34. Nescience Has no Existence**

**Rama:** "Where is the question of ignorance in such a Brahman?"

**Vasishta:**

ब्रह्मतत्त्वमिदं सर्वमासीदस्ति भविष्यति ।
निर्विकारमनाद्यन्तं नाविद्यास्तीति निश्चयः ।।
यस्तु ब्रह्मेति शब्देन वाच्यवाचकयोः क्रमः ।
तत्रापि नान्यताभावमुपदेष्टुं क्रमो ह्यसौ ।।

*brahmatattvamidaṃ sarvamāsīdasti bhaviṣyati |*
*nirvikāramanādyantaṃ nāvidyāstīti niścayaḥ ||*
*yastu brahmeti śabdena vācyavācakayoḥ kramaḥ |*
*tatrāpi nānyatābhāvamupadeṣṭuṃ kramo hyasau ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 49, Sloka 11, 12

"Rama, Your question has validity only if there really were to be a true substance like nescience. The Supreme Brahman is perfect in all respects. It was existent. It exists now and it will continue to exist in the future. Hence It is immutable. It is without a beginning or end. Hence ignorance has no existence. This much is for certain.

You question why we should evoke nescience along with Brahman in our talks. We use these words only to indicate that nescience does not exist separate from Brahman. This is purely a tactic adopted for teaching purposes. In order to explain the immutability and uniqueness of Brahman in an intelligible manner, we invented the term nescience in order to explicate a few things on that basis and establish the non-duality of Brahman. When we introduce an intermittent fictitious explanatory entity, how can you think it to be a real substance?"

**Rama:** "Sir, you devoted the entire first part of the Chapter: The Calm Down to explain nescience. The central theme of that chapter was contained in the story of Sage Gadhi. Lord Vishnu acceded to Gadhi's request to show him (Gadhi) the nature of *māya*. Yesterday you referred to that chapter. Quoting you:

यथा भ्रान्तिरविद्येयं तथेत्तं च विचार्यते

*yathā bhrāntiravidyeyaṃ tathettaṃ ca vicāryate*

"You said 'I shall now tell you the nature of imaginary nescience after a critical analysis.' It indicates that you accepted the existence of nescience. But now you seem to speak in contradictory terms."

**Vasishta:** "Rama! You were unenlightened at that time. It befell on us to teach the essence of Truth to you who was still in an ignorant state. We invented a few terms to suit your level of understanding. We adopted the method of teaching you using words like nescience, individual (*jīva)* etc.

"Let us say, there was an utterly ignorant dullard in a village. A guru like me taught him that every object in this world was Brahman. The dullard needed some money after a few days. He went to a dried up log of wood in the village outskirts. Hailing the log as the Supreme Brahman, he narrated to the log the problem he was in. He requested it to lend him a few bucks. Such will be the consequence of teaching the higher knowledge to dullards.

"Elders stipulated a few conditions for passing on the philosophical knowledge. What

does ‘stipulated’ mean? It means they formulated; they created. Would they announce upfront that they fabricated those rules? The student by himself will later understand even without the teachers telling him that the fabricated rules have no true validity once the main purpose of education is achieved. That was the main reason that I explicated so elaborately on the essence of *māya* in the chapter on The Calm Down. Rama, you should stop considering nescience as true. Get rid of the innate tendencies of ignorance in mind and abide in Non- dual Bliss.”

**Rama:** “Revered Teacher! By your Grace I obtained the Perfect state. I do not have any misgivings. Because you said that I have to get certain clarifications for the benefit of the general public, I would pose a question.

“A person has just lost his life. His organs are all okay. But they are not able to cognize anything. Eyes do not see. Ears do not hear. So is the case with the other organs. Why are the very same organs which worked so well when he was alive become non-functional?”

**35. The Composite of Eight Cities**

**Vasishta:** “The organs, mind, or things like a pot, a cloth etc. do not have any existence separate from Consciousness. Subtler than space is Consciousness. Pure Consciousness changed to the form of the Composite of Eight Cities because of the past impressions within *Maya Shabala Brahman*. (Puryashtaka, the Composite of Eight Cities comprises 1. Five sense organs; 2. Five action organs; 3. Five *prānas* (life-forces); 4. Five fundamental elements; and 5. Inner organ ( Fourfold *antahkarana*); 6. Nescience; 7. Desires; and 8. Actions). The very same Composite of Eight Cities originated as the initial thing, and by various combinations of its parts, it became sense organs, actions organs, pots, cloths etc. This is expressed in the Upanishads as follows:

**मायां तु प्रकृतिं विद्यात् मायिनं तु महेस्वरम्**
**अस्यावयव भूतैस्तु व्याप्तं सर्वमिदं जगत्**

*māyāṃ tu prakṛtiṃ vidyāt māyinaṃ tu mahesvaram*
*asyāvayava bhūtaistu vyāptaṃ sarvamidaṃ jagat*

Upanishad

“Illusion is the initial thing. Its substratum is the Supreme Brahman. The constituents of illusion (*māya*) pervade the entire world.

“The mental modifications generated in the mind which is a part of the Composite of Eight Cities, can only reflect (bring to cognizance) the external objects like a pot or a cloth which are also a part in it. When they get reflected thus, we say that the organs are able to perceive the corresponding objects. Now let us take up the dead body. The individual (*jīva*) self has left the body. Leaving the body too is one of his imaginations. Because of that imagination of deserting the body, the modifications in his mind start reflecting the new objects that he conceives but not any more of the old things. Consequently, sensory spheres in the body lose the capacity of perception.

“The sensory organ is different from the sensory sphere. The dead body contains the sensory sphere. Sense organ being a part of the Composite of Eight Cities has left along with *jīva*. So you do not see any more actions in the corpse.”

**Rama:** "From what you say, it appears that the Composite of Eight Cities resembles a mirror which can create thousands of worlds. Will you please explain it a little? There is a reason for my question. The world is formed by the five gross elements. The mind you refer to in the Composite of Eight Cities has formed from the five subtle elements. You say that the subtle mind reflects the gross world. Hence my request for a detailed description of the Composite of Eight Cities."

**Vasishta:** "I explained in detail the genesis of the world in the first to the fourteenth Sargas of the Chapter: Creation. From the attributeless Supreme Brahman, the five fundamental elements originated. The process of quintuplication generated the gross five elements from the subtle elements. From the gross five elements the entire universe originated. Consciousness that identifies itself with the created world considering it to be its own body, gets the names such as Sutratma, Praanatma, Hiranyagarbha etc. Consciousness identified with the bodies of the gods and men which are part of the created world is '*jiva*.'

Further, the same Consciousness gets christened as ego by contemplating on I-consciousness; by thinking about thoughts, it becomes mind; by contemplating on determination it becomes buddhi (intellect); thinking of sense organs it becomes senses; thinking of a body, it gets the name of body; thinking as a pot, it gets the name of a pot; thinking of a rock, it gets the name of a rock and so on. Because Consciousness obtained the name of *jīva* here, he is known as 'knower' if actions are done with sense organs. When the actions are done with the action organs, he is called the 'doer'. When he experiences happiness and sorrow as a result of these actions, he is called the 'experiencer'. He is called a witness if he functions unconcerned with any of these things.

"Ordinary folk keep fluctuating between happiness and sorrow like the drift wood caught up in waves. Enlightened individuals like Sanaka and others having obtained Self-Knowledge in their very first birth in the Kalpa (period), stay steady without being affected by happiness or sorrow. Some others of middle level work hard for thousands of births and attain salvation. I described in detail the various steps responsible for gradual liberation and also the Knowledge path in the Chapter on Creation towards the end (near about the 116th Sarga).

"You have a reservation about the possibility of the gross world getting reflected in the mind which is of a subtle nature. What you imply is that the external things like the pot or rock etc. are inert whereas the individual inside is conscious. The senses that perceive the external objects are also inert. So your question is how a linkage gets established between the conscious individual and the inert things.

"Now please analyze it carefully. According to the process explained by me, the all-pervading Consciousness imagined a Composite of Eight Cities, imagined itself to have entered into it. It imagined the Composite of Eight Cities to be its standard measure for dimensions. Further, it thinks that 'I am within the confines of the Composite of Eight Cities from head to toe and I cannot extend beyond it'. With this thought, the consciousness confined within the body had given rise to a new system of living. It feels that it is alive because of the new system. It experiences happiness and sorrow remaining within the body as long as that thought prevails. It does not go beyond the body in order to continue the experiencing of sorrows and happiness.

"The consciousness within the body cannot stay idle without experiencing the happiness and sorrows. The innate tendencies are the reason for that. The consciousness tied

up within the body stretches out of the body through the channels of the senses and reaches the external objects like a pot or rock. A feeling that it sees is generated and through that feeling an experience of happiness or sorrow is conveyed to the confined inner individual (*jīva*). I detailed the processes in the Chapter on Behavior of an Aspirant under the section: *Pratyaksha pramana* (Direct Cognition).

"The sense organs within the body of an individual who imagines being alive, associate with consciousness and transmit consciousness to the inert materials like the pot and the rock and make them known.This can go on till the imagination that'I am alive' continues. The process will not continue when the imagination that 'I am dead'comes up."

**36. Only Two States - Dream and Deep Sleep**

**Rama:** "Sir, your response is centered on the object and its reflected image. We see reflections from many things – mirrors, water, gemstones etc. What is exactly an object and its reflection? Can you amplify their nature?"

**Vasishta:** "I am glad you are able to go to the depth of it. Your contention is that if the object is true, its reflection has got to be true to at least a little extent. But it is not a valid assumption. Under every circumstance, the reflection is a virtual (unreal) image. Never consider the reflected image to be true.

"I described the process of creation in the 12th and 13th Sargas of the Chapter on Creation. I established there that the world, individuals and Hiranyagarbha are creatures of imagination. I gave a detailed account, from several angles, of nescience which is the root cause for creation.

I confirmed that the world, though orderly in nature, is a phantasm, superimposed on the Supreme Brahman. The individual (*jiva*) moves from one body to another like moving from one dream to another by the force and variegated character of his past impressions. All this is a part of the false appearance (*vivarta*). Therefore, I declared earlier that the wakeful world encompassing the series of births and deaths is just a dream. In the third Sarga of the Chapter on Creation, I referred to the wakeful world as the mentation of Hiranyagarbha.

"The three states - wakeful, deep sleep and dream worlds - are well known. But if you look at it analytically, there are only two states – dream and deep sleep.

वस्तु दृष्टमदृष्टं च स्वप्ने समनुभूयते ।
जीवस्वप्ने जगद्रूपं विद्धि वेद्यविदां वर ।।

*vastu dṛṣṭamadṛṣṭaṃ ca svapne samanubhūyate |*
*jīvasvapne jagadrūpaṃ viddhi vedyavidāṃ vara ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 51, Sloka 44

"The world that you observe is totally a dream. The dreams you have in your sleep form a small part of it. Just to differentiate the two, the first one is called 'wakeful state.' Such a label misleads one to assume that it is a true state. To avoid this confusion, I call it as 'a living dream'. I named the smaller part of the dream state within it as 'dead dream'.

It is a fitting name because dreams come during sleep which almost resembles death. The entire world including the dead dream part is called a 'living dream' because it is the dream of Hiranyagarbha, the first individual (*jiva*). Thus, Rama, the world visible to you is within the 'living dream' of Hiranayagarbha. What was seen earlier as well as what was not seen appear in the living dream. Vedas declare:

**दृष्टं च अदृष्टं च श्रुतम् च अश्रुतं च**
**अनुभूतं च अननुभूतं च सर्वं पश्यति**

*dṛṣṭaṃ ca adṛṣṭaṃ ca śrutam ca aśrutaṃ ca*
*anubhūtaṃ ca ananubhūtaṃ ca sarvaṃ paśyati*

Upanishad

"Whatever was seen or not seen before, heard or not heard before, experienced or not experienced before is seen in the living dream.

"Several things such as obtaining a never-before-seen divine body after losing the present body occur in dreams. This happens because of the influence of past impressions. The word '*adrishta*' (unseen) in the above mantra should be taken to mean things not seen in this birth because there is no thing that is not experienced at one time or the other during the infinite births and deaths. If it was not experienced at all, there is no scope for it to be stored as an impression. The other words (unheard) **आश्रितम्** *āśritam* , (unexperienced) **अननुभूतम्** *ananubhūtam* have also to be interpreted in the same way."

**Rama:** "In that case, Sir, listening to the Vedic statements being a part of the past impressions, liberation obtained after such listening would be a part of the dream. If so, it would be difficult to admit that liberation is True."

**Vasishta:** "No, that is not correct. Liberation is attainment of Oneness with Brahman. If it was experienced at any time during the state of 'living dream', we could expect it to be stored as an impression and be produced again as liberation. Then we can describe it as a living dream. But none, whosoever it may be, under any state or in any birth had an experience of Brahman. An experience that had been experienced once can become an impression. But something that was never experienced could not become an impression. Therefore, 'being Brahman' can never become an impression. It cannot be a dream. We need not doubt the fact that liberation is permanent and True.

"Unless one is liberated, an individual (*jiva*) cannot be free from body and related actions. Even if you somehow get rid of the physical body, the Composite of Eight Cities will not leave.

**मनोबुद्धिरहंकारस्तथा तन्मात्रपञ्चकम् ।**
**इति पुर्यष्टकं प्रोक्तं देहोऽसावातिवाहिकः ।।**

*manobuddhirahaṃkārastathā tanmātrapañcakam |*
*iti puryaṣṭakaṃ proktaṃ deho'sāvātivāhikaḥ ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 51, Sloka 50

"Mind, intellect and the five *tanmatras* together make the Composite of Eight Cities. It is the subtle body. It is the transporter or subtler (*ātivāhika*) body. Until it gets liberated, it will not be destroyed."

[**Note:** A reference to the transporter or subtler body was made in the Story of Leela in the Chapter on Creation.]

**Rama:** "Teacher, the Composite of Eight Cities as defined by you here differs from that of the scriptures and what is generally understood to be. The eight components commonly mentioned are: The five sense organs, The five action organs, The five life-breaths, The five gross elements, The fourfold *Antahkarana ,* Nescience, Desire, Actions.

"How can you differ from this?"

**Vasishta:** "Both are same, My Boy! What I talked about was the formless or finer state. It is also described as 'subtle form'. When the *tanmatras* condense and solidify, it attains the form as depicted by you."

**Rama:** "You cannot get a solid rock by piling up even millions of skies ! How could the subtle Composite of Eight Cities attain gross form?"

**Vasishta:** "That is right; there is no scope for it to get gross form. That is the very reason why we say it is nothing but an illusory attribution to consider the subtle Composite of Eight Cities as solidified, or to imagine the physical body over it and so on. What is freed by liberation is the subtle bondage and not the gross bondage. I, therefore, defined the Composite of Eight Cities on purpose in those terms."

**Rama:** "Are there varieties in bondage too?"

**Vasishta:** "Why not? There are two types of bondages. One is of a causal form and it is nescience. The other is its effect and is the subtle body.

"We need not discuss the physical bondage arising from the gross physical body because the physical body disintegrates every time. Nobody gets liberated by the disintegration of the physical body. Even if one individual attains liberation, the physical world which is the reason for the physical body does not end. What is destroyed is the bondage. Hence the texts on salvation do not devote much attention to the physical body.

"If we incisively examine in this manner, an individual suffers only two states. They are the dream and deep sleep states. I told you about it already. What moves around in the form of movable and immovable creatures in your dream and deep sleep states is your transporter body. You can now appreciate the reason for the definition given by me.

"Liberation obtained from Self-Knowledge is also of two types. One is Jivanmukti (liberation with body), also called *turīya* state. The second is Videha mukti (liberation without body). This is the same as the state beyond *turīya*. If an individual has to achieve these types of liberation, he should give up desires of worldly things arising from past impressions. It is called the Path of Non-Attachment (*asamśakti* yoga). Lord Sri Krishna will be teaching this as the principal method to Arjun towards the end of the forth-coming period of Dwaapara."

[**Note:** Sage Vasishta is going to present an exposition on Bhagavad-Gita from the next Sarga i.e. the 52nd onwards. The 51st Sarga contains a lot of theoretical exegesis.

Therefore, it behoves us to revisit the twists and turns in the 51st Sarga before we move on to the next Sarga.]

**37. A Quick Review**

Sri Rama requested Sage Vasishta for an elaboration on the Composite of Eight Cities in the 50th Sarga. He interrupted Sage Vasishta's explanation and sought a clarification on whether the object or image was real. Sage Vasishta's response to this question continued into the 51st Sarga. Sage Vasishta unambiguously stated that the reflected image was unreal. He added that the visible world was no more than a reflection. Rama came up with a counter question on this. His question was: If the visible world were to be unreal, a mere phantasm, how could teaching of Self-Knowledge and consequent liberation be true as they formed a part of the visible world?

In response to this question, Sage Vasishta established that liberation was not a part of the reflected world and linked his explanation with Rama's earlier question on the Composite of Eight Cities. He classified the Composite of Eight Cities into two types – the gross and the subtle ones. He further pointed out that the gross Composite of Eight Cities emerges from the subtle one only as a superimposition. From this it followed that there were two types of bondages to the individuals. The subtle bondage was said to be more harmful than the gross physical bondage. In this context, Sage Vasishta made it clear that only two states existed to an individual and not three as usually presented. The two were dream and deep sleep states. The wakeful state was said to be a part of the dream state.

Sage Vasishta advised that the Path of Non-Attachment was the best to achieve an everlasting *turīya* state and made a reference to Sri Krishna and Arjun who would be taking birth in the future Dwapara period. With this observation, the 52nd Sarga commenced.]

**Rama:** "Teacher! Who is Arjun? Who is Sri Krishna? When are they going to be born? Why and how did Sri Krishna teach Arjun the Path of Non-Attachment?"

**Vasishta:** "Rama, we are now almost at the end of the Treta period. Towards the end of the next period, in order to reduce the load on earth, Lord Vishnu is going to incarnate in two forms. One of them is the body of Sri Krishna with complete attributes of Lord Vishnu. His physical form will take birth in the Yadu lineage of rulers. The second physical form intermixed with a part of god Indra will be born in the Kuru dynasty as the son of King Pandu and will have the name Arjun.

"A part of the God of Death (Yama Dharma Raja) will be born as the elder brother of Arjun. They will have a paternal cousin brother by name Dhuryodhan. The cousin brothers will fight a great war involving eighteen military formations, (each formation called an *akśouhini** ) because of a dispute over the distribution of the kingdom.

[**Note:** * *akśouhini*: An *akśouhini* Formation comprises 21,870 chariots, 21,870 elephants, 65,410 cavalry, and 109,350 Foot-soldiers.]

"At the beginning of the war, Arjun, the second body of Sri Krishna, will be overcome by normal human traits. He gets aroused by feelings of righteousness. Anticipating the

enormous destruction of life and limb in the war, he feels terribly depressed because of attachment to his ilk. Lord Vishnu who possesses perfect Knowledge of Self and is in the body of Krishna will deliver a sermon to Ajun on the essence of Truth in the war field itself.

**38. The Celestial Song (Bhagavad-Gita)**

"Lord Sri Krishna begins his teaching with a couple of mantras from Katha Upanishad.

"Hey Arjun, you think that there are so many living people in the world, some of them are being born and some of them are going to die. That is not the Truth. Immanent in the multitude of beings is one Supreme Self. He is eternal. He is indestructible. He wears the bodies. The entire lot of visible bodies is His only. Bodies are impermanent. They are born and will die. Katha Upanishad says it so well:

**न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचिन्नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः ।**
**अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ।।**
**य एनं वेत्ति हन्तारं यश्चैनं मन्यते हतम् । उभौ तौ न विजानीतो नायं हन्ति न हन्यते ।।**

*na jāyate mriyate vā kadācinnāyaṃ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ |*
*ajo nityaḥ śāśvato'yaṃ purāṇo na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre ||*
*ya enaṃ vetti hantāraṃ yaścainaṃ manyate hatam |*
*ubhau tau na vijānīto nāyaṃ hanti na hanyate ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 52, Sloka 36-37

"The Supreme Self is never born; nor will ever die. It is not that He exists in flashes because He is unborn. He is ever-present. He is permanent. He is very ancient without growth or disintegration. The body may be subjected to many changes, but He is changeless.

"That being the Truth, only the ignorant one considers the slayer of a body as killer or the slain body to be a victim. The Supreme Self does not slay anybody nor is it slain by any one. He is infinite. He is unique. He is subtler than space. How can there be an end to the Supreme Self? Hey Arjun! Please know that you are yourself that blemishless Supreme Brahman.; you have no birth. You are the indestructible permanence. You are the tranquil one beyond sorrows."

[**Note:** The verses '*na jāyate……' and 'ya enaṃ vetti* ' appear respectively as the 20th and 19th verses in the second chapter of Bhagavad-Gita. Keeping in mind the meaning of these two verses, Sage Vasishta changed the sequence of the verses in his presentation here. The original source for these verses is Katha Upanishad which presents them in the order given here. Sage Vasishta adopted many of the mantras of Katha Upanishad as verses with a few additional words here and there in his discourse. Many great sages adopt this narration.]

**Sri Bhagavan:** "Arjun! You are not the slayer. Give up the blemished egoistic notion that 'I have the ownership for the act of killing.' In fact you are the eternal Supreme Self without birth or death.

**यस्य नाहंकृतो भावो बुद्धिर्यस्य न लिप्यते ।**
**हत्वापि स इमाँल्लोकान्न हन्ति न निबध्यते ।।**

*yasya nāhaṃkṛto bhāvo buddhiryasya na lipyate |*
*hatvāpi sa imāँllokānna hanti na nibadhyate ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 53, Sloka 2

(* This verse comes at Chapter XVIII, Sloka 17, Bhagavad-Gita).

"I shall tell you in detail the advantage of giving up egoism. Whosoever is free from the notion of egoism, whose mind is not affected by the results of his good or evil actions, though he kills everything in all the worlds, he kills not. He is not bound by any of these actions" - "Whatever you conceive of within your mind, you begin to experience the same things externally. So banish the thoughts like 'I am of this type, this belongs to me or that doesn't, I obtained this, I lost that'.

**स्वात्मांशैः क्रियमाणानि गुणैः कर्माणि भागशः ।**
**अहंकारविमूढात्मा कर्ताहमिति मन्यते ।।**

*svātmāṃśaiḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi bhāgaśaḥ |*
*ahaṃkāravimūḍhātmā kartāhamiti manyate ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 53, Sloka 5

(* This verse appears with two words changed in III – 27, Bhagavad-Gita. '*svātmāṃśaiḥ*' and '*bhāgaśaḥ* ' are changed to '*prakriteh*' and '*sarvasah*' respectively in the Gita).

"The three qualities of *sattva* etc. (which bring about a distinction (duality) though they are part of his own self) and organs and body working as tools perform all actions. But with understanding deluded by egoism, an individual thinks that 'I am the doer'.

"The eye sees. Let it. The ear hears. Let it. Let the skin sense the touch. Let the nose smell. The tongue tastes. Let it. Where am I in it all? I do not have anything to do with them. And that is the truth.

"Next consider the mind. It gets various thoughts and counter thoughts. Where do you, the Supreme Self, come in this? How are you concerned with its sorrow?

"Say several people together do a job. Will it be acceptable if a single person stakes the claim that he did it all by himself? Wouldn't you become a laughing stock if you, unrelated to any of this, claim ownership for the action?

**कायेन मनसा बुद्ध्या केवलैरिन्द्रियैरपि ।**
**योगिनः कर्म कुर्वन्ति सङ्गं त्यक्त्वात्मशुद्धये ।।**

*kāyena manasā buddhyā kevalairindriyairapi |*
*yoginaḥ karma kurvanti saṅgaṃ tyaktvātmaśuddhaye ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 53, Sloka 9

(* appears as V – 11, Bhagavad-Gita).

"Seekers following the path of Yoga strive to purify themselves performing action with body, mind, senses, and intellect forsaking attachment. When such is the case, why do you make it an issue for an action which is mandatory for you? One remains healthy irrespective of the type of work done, as long as the toxin of egoism does not enter the body.

Any work done by a person in the empirical world or rituals carried out by him as per scriptures will not affect him. He will not be affected by the results of such works. Such actions of his amounts to inaction.

**निर्ममो निरहंकारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ।**
**यः स कार्यमकार्यं वा कुर्वन्नपि न लिप्यते ।।**

*nirmamo nirahaṃkāraḥ samaduḥkhasukhaḥ kṣamī |*
*yaḥ sa kāryamakāryaṃ vā kurvannapi na lipyate ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 53, Sloka 12

(* The last line of the above verse is also found in V – 7, Bhagavad-Gita. Remaining words of the verse too appear somewhere or other in the Gita).

"An individual is not tainted even while he performs a work, if the work, good or bad, is done, with forbearance and equanimity towards happiness and sorrow, forsaking the feeling of 'mine' and the egoistic feeling that 'I am doing'.

"Further, Oh Arjun, the war has come as a mandate for you because you belong to the warrior class. It is always better to act according to the mandate whether the action is mean or improper. It gives you merit and progress. May you be immortal pursuing the ordained action!

"The secret is, it is always beneficial if one acts even foolishly according to one's mandate. That being the case, is it necessary to say how advantageous it would be for a person to take mandatory action intelligently and with good intentions? To act intelligently implies acting without ego. An intellectual mind functioning without ego will not get tainted. True Yoga is to be devoid of I-consciousness (ego).

**योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनंजय ।**
**निःसङ्गस्त्वं यथाप्राप्तकर्मवान्न निबध्यसे ।।**

*yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā dhanaṃjaya |*
*niḥsaṅgastvaṃ yathāprāptakarmavānna nibadhyase ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 53, Sloka 16

(* The first part of this verse occurs in II – 48, Bhagavad-Gita).

"Evenness of mind with regard to success and failure when you perform an action is true Yoga. Being steadfast in Yoga, perform actions without attachment to the result of the actions. You will not have any bondage if you act as per the need of the time without desire and with detachment.

"In case it is not possible to do so, you may perform mandated actions with a calm mind with dedication of the fruits of the work to the Supreme Brahman. You will be then the Supreme Brahman. If you so feel that the Knowledge of attributeless Supreme Brahman is difficult to adopt, you may contemplate on Brahman with attributes. Brahman with attributes is also called Ishwar. Dedicate all your actions to Ishwar, be unconcerned of the results of actions, and merge in Ishwar. You will be the Self within all the creatures in the creation. You will be salt of the earth. You will not be bound by the actions of your works.

"One another way is to abandon all thoughts and intentions. Discarding intentions is also known as the path of relinquishment. Be composed; be balanced in happiness and sorrow; have a placid mind; and constantly contemplate on Truth. Following the path of relinquishment (**सन्न्यास योग युक्तात्मा** *sannyāsa yoga yuktātmā* *) thus, you will be free of bondage from your actions."

(* The phrase '**सन्न्यास योग युक्तात्मा** *sannyāsa yoga yuktātmā*' used here by Sage Vasishta appears in, IX – 28, Bhagavad-Gita).

**39. Four Methods to Attain the Supreme**

**Arjun:** "Lord! You have thus far described four methods.

1. Detachment
2. Dedication to the Supreme Brahman (attributeless).
3. Dedication to Ishwar (God with attributes).
4. Relinquishment.

"Will you please amplify a bit on each of them? You also used two distinct terms – 'Yoga' and 'Contemplation on Truth'. Kindly explain what these terms mean and what the difference between them is."

**Sri Bhagavan:** "In the mature stage of *nirvikalpa samādhi* (see Glossary under *samādhi*), with all your thoughts and intentions having been pacified and remnant impressions having been exterminated, you will experience thoughtlessness. That experience is the Supreme Brahman. There are two approaches to reach that Brahman. One is by Knowledge and the other is by Yoga.

"Knowledge is the state when the modifications of the mind attain the form of Brahman (**अखण्ड आकार वृत्ति** *akhaṇḍa ākāra vṛtti* ). Measures of concentration which lead to such a state are called *Yoga*.

"Dedication to the Supreme Brahman is an 'intense contemplation' (*bhāvana*) that the entire world including 'me' is Brahman. (There is an I-consciousness which engenders attachment with a feeling of 'me'. Towards what is the attachment? It is towards the world. Dedication to Brahman is the Knowledge that these two (I-consciousness and world) are not distinct from Brahman. This clarifies your query regarding 'Dedication to the Supreme Brahman'.

"In order to be established in such Knowledge, it is necessary that one should be aware that both I-consciousness and world are unreal, this duo does not possess 'beingness' on their own, and that true existence lies only with the Supreme Brahman. You should be clear on what Supreme Brahman is, to appreciate it fully. Therefore, I shall explicate what Supreme Brahman is.

"It is emptiness inside; emptiness outside. It is like a block of stone. It is immutable. It is pure like space. It is not a percept and is not different from the 'on-looker' (**दृक्** *dṛk*). '*dṛk* is the 'Potent-Looker' when there is nothing to be seen.

"Empty space appears like the sky. Similarly, the no 'thingness' of Brahman appears to undergo some undefined modification and as a result it looks as though something new has come out of it.

That is the illusory world. Illusion, like silver in nacre, is an appearance of a thing that does not really exist. Within that Supreme Consciousness which is spread like an infinite mighty ocean, emergence of a miniscule speck of an illusion creates the feeling of I-consciousness within individuals. Why should we take to this miniscule speck that comes just as a flash in the pan?

"Even at the time the feeling of I-consciousness appears to be distinct from the Supreme Brahman, it is in fact merged in It. This is so because there is no scope for differences or delimited parts within Supreme Brahman. The reflected Self (**प्रत्यगात्म** *pratyagātma*) called I- consciousness is not different from Infinite Consciousness which is a name for the Supreme Brahman. Hence, I-consciousness and attachment too are forms of the perfect Brahman.

"However, there is a little twist here. Because of attachment and I-consciousness, an individual (*jīva*) finds certain strange differentiations. But along with the differences, beingness and appearance are seen to be innately permeating all substances. Because the beingness and appearance are one only, an individual should grok that there is only One Self and there is no multiplicity of creatures. But this understanding does not come by anybody. That is quite uncanny.

"Attachment and ego feelings in the mind of an individual who discriminates between true beingness and unreality get attenuated. As a result he will lose interest in the results of his actions. Sanyasa Yoga is thus abandonment of the desire for the results of actions. This answers your query about 'Relinquishment'.

"With decreasing interest in the results of actions, your thoughts plummet down. Detachment is to give up thoughts in this manner. It answers your first query.

"I shall now answer your third query. Dedication to Ishwar comprises a meditation on the following lines: Investigate what could be the material cause for the visible dualistic world. Establish the cause to be Ishwar through inquiry. Since effect can never be different from the cause, realize that the multiple manifestations in the dualistic world are all a form of Ishwar.

"Arjun, know that ignorance is the reason for the imagination of multiplicity. As a matter of fact, the world does not exist as a thing. Of course, the word 'world' does exist. It connotes the Supreme Self. No need to entertain any doubt regarding this. Therefore, I declare that I am the four quarters; I am the moving world; I am the unmoving space; I am action; I am time; I am multiplicity as well as non-duality.

**मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।**
**मामेवैष्यसि युक्त्वैवमात्मानं मत्परायणः ।**

*manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī māṃ namaskuru |*
*māmevaiṣyasi yuktvaivamātmānaṃ matparāyaṇaḥ |*
Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 53, Sloka 34

(* This verse appears at IX – 34, Bhagavad-Gita. The first part is repeated in Bhagavad-Gita, XVIII – 65).

"Employ your mind fully on me. Develop love for me. Be devoted to me. Sacrifice unto me. Bow down to me. This is Yoga. Thus having made your heart steadfast in me, taking me as the Supreme Goal, you will come to me.

"Both non-dual and dualist forms are mine. Focus your mind on any one of them as convenient to you. Develop the nine types of devotion* like listening, praising etc. towards that form. Continue adoring me through the observance of rituals of either knowledge or action. Try to merge in me through those rituals. Adopting such methods, you will come to me directly through the Knowledge path or gradually through other paths."

[**Note:** * Nine Types of Devotion: Listening, Praising, Repeatedly Remembering, Worshipping at the feet, Adoring, Saluting, Servitude, Friendship and Subjugation of self.]

**Arjun:** "My Lord! You declare that you have two forms. You also indirectly indicate one is superior to the other. Please let me know when and in which form I should meditate to reach my goal quickly."

**Sri Bhagavan:** "Arjun! One is the normal form of mine. The other is the far superior one. The normal form is the one with four hands holding conch, wheel, mace and lotus flower.

Blemishless, non-dual, brilliant and Supreme is the second form without a beginning, middle or end. It is also renowned as Brahman, Self, Supreme Self and so on.

"So long as you continue to be ignorant without any Knowledge of Self, be devoted to the four-handed form. You will come to know gradually my Supreme form through continued devotion. Eventually, you will be free of births. In case you are aware of Truth, take shelter in my Supreme form which is also in you as your 'self'.

"I referred to several things to be my own Self a while ago. (I am the four quarters; I am the moving world; I am the unmoving space etc.). My intention was to convey to you that the Conscious-substratum behind them all is my Pure Consciousness. I hope you are able to grasp my teaching properly. I also hope you identified yourself with your True Form. I trust you discarded thoughts and intentions. May you be now the True Non-dual Self!

**40. Yoga and Skill**

**सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि ।**
**पश्य त्वं योगयुक्तात्मा सर्वत्र समदर्शनः ।।**

*sarvabhūtasthamātmānaṃ sarvabhūtāni cātmani |*
*paśya tvaṃ yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 53, Sloka 43

(* This verse appears at VI – 29, Bhagavad-Gita).

"There is one substance innately common to all things. That is the Substratum Consciousness. He who is focused unswervingly on that commonality is the one with evenness of vision. Achieving the evenness of vision is Yoga. (see '*samatvam Yoga ucyate*, II – 48, Bhagavad-Gita).

"With your heart steadfast in Yoga and with an eye of evenness for all things, realize experientially that you exist as Substratum Consciousness in all beings and all beings are in you as Substratum Consciousness.

[**Note:** Some teachers hold that Yoga is dexterity at work. They quote '*yogah karmaśu kauśalam*', II – 50 Bhagavad-Gita, as evidence for their stand. But this is not a correct interpretation. Yoga was already defined two verses earlier as evenness of vision (in the 48th verse of Bhagavad-Gita). So there is no need to redefine Yoga in the 50th verse. We have to understand that the 50th verse provides a definition for '*kauśalam*' (dexterity). Dexterity is defined by Lord Sri Krishna to be an evenness of vision during performance of the mandatory works. Shankara clarified the above point in his commentary. He said in his commentary:

**तद्धि कौशलं यत् बन्धस्वभावान्यपि कर्माणि**
**समत्व बुद्ध्या स्वभावात् निवर्तन्ते**

*taddhi kauśalaṃ yat bandhasvabhāvānyapi karmāṇi*
*samatva buddhyā svabhāvāt nivartante*

"Any work, by its very nature, creates bondage. But if the deeds are done with an evenness of mind, the actions lose this tendency and release us from bondage. 'Skill in performance of actions' according to Shankara, refers to this subtle point. Hence, it is appropriate to assign the meaning of evenness to *yoga* and not dexterity.]

**Sri Bhagavan:**

**सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि न स भूयोऽभिजायते ।।**

*sarvathā vartamāno'pi na sa bhūyo'bhijāyate* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 53, Sloka 44

(* These words appear two times in Bhagavad-Gita – at VI – 31 and XIII – 23).

"He who is able to see in all creatures the inherent commonly existing one Self, will not be reborn whatever be his mode of life.

"Correct interpretation for the words '*sarvatra sama darshanam*' is as follows: when you speak of multiplicity of things, the multiplicity in this context actually points towards the commonality behind them all. The commonality refers to your Self. What is Self? It is not '*sat*' nor is it '*asat*'. '*sat*' stands here for earth, water and fire elements, the trio having a form. '*asat*' stands for air and space, the duo having no form. Neither of them is Self. Whatever form It takes, It becomes that thing (like the illusory appearance of silver on nacre).

"You may feel that you have never encountered such 'Self' anywhere. But that is not true. "Self' is that very thing which resides within every creature in all the worlds and illuminates an experiential sense of 'me' (I-consciousness).

"Water is on earth. Milk comes from cows. Oceans contain salt. Sweetness lies in sugar. You get a gustatory experience of these different tastes when sensed by tongue. The experience of taste itself is Self. Hence we cannot say that no one is ever aware of Self.

Further, we are aware of what we experience now and we are aware when that experience is gone later. We possess this sense of awareness because of the subtle Self inside.

"You may ask where in the body the Self occurs. Just as butter is spread in the entire milk, Self exists as the substratum in all substances. Like the luster is spread all over inside a diamond and also projects itself outside, Self permeates the entire body and exudes itself outside as 'I am' thought. Diamond may have luster, yet the gemstone and the luster are not one. They are not glued to one another. Similar is the case with body and the Self.

"Let us say that there are thousands of pots. Space exists inside and outside the pots. Likewise, Self exists inside and outside the bodies in all the worlds. Hidden lies the thread running through the beads in a necklace; Self too strings subtly all bodies.

"From all the above, we may conclude that right from the Supreme Brahman to the lowliest blade of grass, the Common Beingness (i.e. the 'existence' principle common to all things in the world) is Self! Self does not have birth.

"The true nature of Supreme Brahman is to exist as substratum and to be immutable. A single necklace is noticed instead of a string of separate beads because of a thread running through all of them. A piece of stone appears as a gemstone because of the luster uniformly spread out all through the stone. Likewise the appearance of a single individual (*jiva*) is a fallacious appearance, though Brahman is the one permeating them all. Therefore, the statement that Brahman has manifested in the form of an individual self arises when viewed from the angle of the illusory superimposed objects (i.e. from an empirical point of view). Both the individual (*jiva*) and Brahman being forms of the Substratum, who is the killer and who is being killed? The good and bad or the happiness and sorrow of the world do not adhere to It.

"Everything in the world, like the virtual images in a mirror, are visible in the Self for some time. Then they disappear for some time. Nothing sticks to the mirror. The mirror remains a mere unaffected witness. Though all the things in the universe are engendered and destroyed, Self stays as a mere witness like the mirror without birth or death. One who can cognize this Truth is the true seer."

[ **Note:** Sage Vasishta used the words, '**यह् पश्यति सह् पश्यति** *yah paśyati sah paśyati*'. This quote appears two times in Bhagavad-Gita too: V – 5 and XIII – 27.]

"Some time back I said that only the consciousness part of the Substratum is "I" (i.e. Supreme Self) and the inert part of the substratum (i.e. body and senses) is not 'I'. You may wonder why I contradict myself now. I divided it into two parts just for the convenience of explanation at that time. Suppose we place a pot in a room of mirrors. You will see a series of pots and mirrors one behind the other in all directions. We get confused to know which is the real pot or real mirror and which one is an image. In order to bring some clarity, we may part the series of images and consider the issue from the viewpoint of each of the images. At the

position of the third image, we have to say that the third image is untrue and the second image is the object. From the position of the second image, we have to admit that the second image is untrue and the first image is the object. From the position of the first image, we have to agree that the true object is the real object and all others are images only. We have taken the second image to be the object for some time in this analysis. Then we said that the first image is the true object. Finally we declared that none of the images are truly the object. This does not amount to a change in my stance. This is merely offering an explanation by partitioning. The division I made into inert and conscious things is based on the same logic.

Modifications of creation, sustenance and dissolution take place in me, like waves in an ocean, when viewed from the position of the Absolute Brahman.

"In the final analysis, all mountains are ultimately stones. All trees are wood. All waves are water. All objects are 'Me' only!

**सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि ।**
**यः पश्यति तथात्मानमकर्तारं स पश्यति ।।**

*sarvabhūtasthamātmānaṃ sarvabhūtāni cātmani* |
*yaḥ paśyati tathātmānamakartāraṃ sa paśyati* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 53, Sloka 60

(* The first part of this verse already appeared as the 43rd verse in this Sarga and also at VI – 29 in Bhagavad-Gita. The second part comes as XIII – 29, Bhagavad-Gita).

"He sees truly who sees that he is in every thing, that every thing is in him and even then he is not the doer.

"It is water only in different waves. It is gold only in different ornaments. It is Self only in different creatures. Now go in the reverse order. Waves are in water. Ornaments are in gold. The Supreme Self contains all the creatures. There is no distinction at all between the Supreme Self and the creatures. Why do you delude yourself? Elders of the bygone days, understood this truth, experienced the Absolute Brahman, were calm in mind and became Jivanmuktas. They easily attained eternal state.

[ **Note:** Thus ends the second Sarga of The Bhagavad-Gita as taught by Sage Vasishta. He continues Lord Sri Krishna's teaching in the next Sarga.]

**Sri Bhagavan:**

**भूय एव महाबाहो श्रृणु मे परमं वचः ।**
**यत्तेऽहं प्रीयमाणाय वक्ष्यामि हितकाम्यया ।।**

*bhūya eva mahābāho śrṛṇu me paramaṃ vacaḥ* |
*yatte'haṃ prīyamāṇāya vakṣyāmi hitakāmyayā* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 54, Sloka 1

(* This verse occurs at X - 1 Bhgavad-Gita).

"Oh Arjun, the Mighty-armed One! As you have been a devoted and attentive listener,

I shall make a very noteworthy point. I referred to the elders who obtained liberation by being calm in mind. Calmness in mind means to be rid of the pairs of opposites. You have to first know well about the pairs of opposites in order to be free of them. You should understand clearly how you relate yourself to them, how such a relationship got established and by what means can you sever the relationship. I shall now teach you about these things.

**मात्रास्पर्शा हि कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः ।**
**आगमापायिनोनित्यास्तांस्तितिक्षस्व भारत**

*mātrāsparśā hi kaunteya śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkhadāḥ* |
*āgamāpāyinonityāstāṃstitikṣasva bhārata* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 54, Sloka 2

(* This verse is at II – 14, Bhagavad-Gita).

"You need not doubt whether one would be able to eliminate happiness and sorrow by acquiring a great amount of knowledge. We generally notice that a person gets deluded when he loses happiness and he feels miserable when in contact with sorrow. You may think that it is quite normal to be affected thus by various things in the world. But that is not correct.

Happiness and sorrow are different from the objects. '*matr*a' in the above verse means the sensory organs like the ear etc. Objects such as sound are referred to as 'contacts.' A conflation of these two produces happiness or sorrow to the living creatures. But happiness and sorrow are not always generated to the same extent.

A cold substance gives comfort in summer; but the same cold substance in winter causes misery. Therefore, we cannot rigidly classify substances into those that produce happiness and those that produce sorrow. They keep changing their effect on the living creatures. But the happiness and misery do not change. You can infer from this that neither '*matras*' nor 'contacts' are forever unchanging. Their nature keeps fluctuating. Therefore, understand that *matras* and contacts are impermanent. You should not be bothered by the happiness or misery brought forth by them. You should develop indifference towards your favorite things and tolerance towards things that you dislike.

"Know that Self is second to none, perfect and blissful by nature. These qualities are unavailable in *matras* or contacts. Hence they are called non-Self. If you keep this in mind, it is impossible to feel elated when you are bestowed with name and fame or wealth or family or other desirable things and feel despondent when you lose them. So Arjun, forsake such fallacies.

**संस्थिता स्पर्शमात्राख्या मात्रास्पर्शभ्रमात्मकः ।**
**समदुःखसुखो धीरः सोऽमृतत्वाय कल्पते ।।**

*saṃsthitā sparśamātrākhyā mātrāsparśabhramātmakaḥ* |
*samaduḥkhasukho dhīraḥ so'mṛtatvāya kalpate* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 54, Sloka 4

(* The latter half of this verse appears with some changes at II – 15, Bhagavad-Gita. The phrase '*sama dukha sukhah*'appears as it is at XII – 13 and XIV – 24, Bhagavad-Gita).

"An individual who realizes that objects and senses are not true and remembers that '*matras*' and 'contacts' are mere illusions, he/she is a true 'Dhira', one having intelligence. '*Dhi*' in Sanskrit means true intelligence. One having true intelligence will be even-minded towards happiness or sorrow and will be eligible for achieving immortality.

**41. Existence and Non-Existence**

**Sri Bhagawan**: "Let me say that it is not all that difficult to attain this state. When once you understand that only Self is True, objects of non-Self lose their locus.

**नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः ।**
**नास्त्येव सुखदुःखादि परमात्मास्ति सर्वगः ।।**

*nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ |*
*nāstyeva sukhaduḥkhādi paramātmāsti sarvagaḥ ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 54, Sloka 7

(* The first half of this verse is one of the cardinal verses in Bhagavad-Gita and appears at II - 16. This verse in Bhagavad-Gita comes in the context of explaining what is '*sat*' (existent) and what is non-existent. Gita points out that the difference between them is understood only by the knower of truth and others cannot decipher the distinction. Gita goes on to elaborate that '*sat*' is eternal and *asat* is ephemeral. It extends the logic to indicate that bodies are untrue and impermanent and the in-dweller of the bodies is the eternal unchanging Self. Arguing thus, Gita persuades Arjun to go ahead with the fight without fear or doubt.

Sri Bhagavan in Yoga Vasishta uses the basic philosophical principle of this verse to establish that happiness and sorrow are impermanent and therefore they lack true 'beingness').

"Arjun! Do you know which truly existing substance is and which is not? Please examine it carefully. A substance with True 'beingness' will not disappear even for a second in all periods of time - past, present and future. Time invariant existence is the prerequisite of '*sat*'. Other than this, anything else is '*asat*.' *Asat* may appear to exist for some time. Even during that time, it lacks true 'beingness'. Though an object might have been in existence for billions of years and it may come into existence again for billions of years, an absence for even a fraction of second in-between implies that its apparent 'beingness' when it exists is merely a phantasm! The unreal never is. That is the supreme doctrine. Several people tried to disprove it in many ways. But none could. For sure an untrue thing can never have existence. For this reason, sorrows and happiness do not exist. They lack beingness. What exists is the Supreme Self only. Though lacking in true beingness, the apparently visible things derive their transient existence from the Supreme Self who pervades everything.

"Arjun, let go of the idea that the world is true. Discard the idea that Self is *asat*. Cast off the mind that creates a link between Self and *asat*. Only Conscious Self will remain then. Abide in It forever!

"Self neither rejoices in happiness nor gets dejected in sorrow. It is the Consciousness

in the body but remains a mere witness to the percepts. Names and forms of things are captured by the mind only. Even so, mind is inert. Self does not suffer any loss even if the mind is annihilated.

"Suppose you got scared because you mistook a rope to be a snake due to ignorance. You will be free of the fear when you acquire the knowledge that it was actually a rope. Owing to nescience you have a fallacious appearance of body and pairs of opposites like happiness and sorrow. The only way to get rid of the illusion is to obtain Self-Knowledge.

"You must know about the birthless and deathless Supreme Self. Achieve Oneness with It. Dispense with the mass of conflicting dualistic substances. Even-minded towards benefit or loss, be stable as a rock unwavering and firm. Perform only such actions that are immediate and come unsought.

**यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।**
**यत्करिष्यसि कौन्तेय तदात्मेति स्थिरो भव ।।**

*yatkaroṣi yadaśnāsi yajjuhoṣi dadāsi yat* |
*yatkariṣyasi kaunteya tadātmeti sthiro bhava* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 54, Sloka 22

(* The first part of this verse appears at IX – 27, Bhagavad-Gita).

"Oh Son of Kunti! Be firmly clear in mind that whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give in alms and whatever you may do in future constitute the Supreme Self."

[**Note:** In the corresponding Sloka in Bhagavad-Gita, Sri Bhagavan asked Arjun to make an offering of everything he did to Himself (Sri Bhagavan). By doing so, the Lord said that Arjun would get the benefit of sacrificing the fruit of action and thereby would achieve liberation. Sri Bhagavan of Yogavaasishta set aside the step of offering to Self. He linked all the works done directly with the Supreme Self. We may notice that there is no basic difference of philosophy here. A few intermittent steps are, however, omitted.]

"An individual obtains externally whatever he wishes for in his heart of hearts. This is indisputable. If you desire to attain Pure Self, meditate on the Truth of Brahman inside you. Jivanmuktas who achieved Self-Knowledge through such contemplation, however, continue to take mandatory actions that befall on them. But they will not perform actions with a motive for benefit as ordinary folk do. They give up all notions of profit and loss; they understand that sacrifice of the fruit of all actions is itself the supreme objective; and their actions are just nominal having realized that actions do not exist in Brahman.

**42. Action and Non-Action**

**कर्मण्यकर्म यः पश्यत्यकर्मणि च कर्म यः ।**
**स बुद्धिमान्मनुष्येषु स चोक्तः कृत्स्नकर्मकृत् ।।**

*karmaṇyakarma yaḥ paśyatyakarmaṇi ca karma yaḥ* |
*sa buddhimānmanuṣyeṣu sa coktaḥ kṛtsnakarmakṛt* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 54, Sloka 25

(* This verse appears at IV – 18, Bhagavad-Gita with one difference: the word '*pasyati*' of this verse is changed to '*pasyet*'. Shankara in his commentary on Gita gave the meaning of *pasyet* to be *pasyati* which is the word used in Yogavaasishta. This is another key verse of Gita).

"As I mentioned already, Brahman is actionless. He who sees inaction in action and action in inaction is truly intelligent among men. Inaction means Brahman.

One who performs the mandatory actions without any desire for the fruit of the actions will see Brahman in all his actions. Such a person is said to be the one who sees inaction in action. One, who realizes that the stream of mandatory actions is a form of Supreme Brahman (inaction), sees action in inaction. One who can do both these things simultaneously is considered to be truly intelligent. He is described by elders as the skillful one performing all virtuous actions.

**मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ।**
**योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनंजय ।।**

*mā karmaphalaheturbhūrmā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi* |
*yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā dhanaṃjaya* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 54, Sloka 26

(* This verse appears as the latter part of 47th verse and first part of the 48th verse in the Second Chapter of Bhagavad-Gita).

"Hence, it is essential that you obtain such discriminatory intelligence. Ordinary people take actions calculating the benefits and losses likely to accrue to them. Their motivation for action comes from the expected result of the action. Do not emulate them. Some people idle around taking no action because they have no interest in the fruit of action. Do not imitate them either. The way you should be is to act by abiding yourself in Yoga. We said earlier that equanimity towards success or failure in action is Yoga. To possess such a balanced mind, you should be free of attachment. Be steadfast in Yoga and perform actions with detachment.

"I shall repeat the advice once more for your sake. Do not have attachment for the results of your actions. Never commit any mistake in understanding the Truth. Do not neglect your responsibilities and fall into the trap of laziness. Follow these steps and move forward."

[ **Note:** Sri Bhagavan used the word '*akarma*' (non-action) in two different meanings. Non- action is whatever is not action. The prefix 'non' is used to negate a sense. The word can be interpreted in different ways. If an ordained action is not done, it is considered to be an evil act. It is also labeled as non-action. Performance of action without desire for the result is not the norm commonly seen in the world. Action without desire is the same as Brahman. That is also described as non-action. One has to be careful in correctly interpreting the meaning of non-action depending on the context.]

**त्यक्त्वा कर्मफलासङ्गं नित्यतृप्तो निराश्रयः ।**
**कर्मण्यभिप्रवृत्तोऽपि नैव किंचित्करोति सः ।।**

*tyaktvā karmaphalāsaṅgaṃ nityatṛpto nirāśrayaḥ* |
*karmaṇyabhipravṛtto'pi naiva kiṃcitkaroti saḥ* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 54, Sloka 28

(* This verse appears at IV – 20, Bhagavad-Gita).

"Desist claim of ownership for an action done. Leave any desire for a specific outcome of the action. You should obtain an everlasting contentment from Self-Knowledge. Consequently, you should lose interest in worldly objects.

You should avoid hoarding all such instruments that help in the acquisition of various benefits. A person acting thus is considered to have renounced actions. A Knower of Self may continue to perform actions because there is no way to be out of action, or because of a desire to help others or in order to be aligned with noble people. Even then he is considered to be non-acting as he had achieved Self-Knowledge.

"You may wonder how it could be non-action when he is performing action. Doership of an action is not strictly governed by taking actions. Doership accrues from a desire for the fruits of action done. Elders knowledgeable of scriptures attest so. There is one thing that is quite critical here. If the essence of Truth is not properly understood and the mind is still unintelligent, there could be a desire for the fruit of action even for a non-doer. Hence forgo completely such ignorance. At the cost of repetition, I shall say it again: take refuge under Pure Knowledge of Truth; renounce desire for the fruit of actions done; an individual acting thus will not acquire doership even if he performs a variety of actions.

"When a person is not the doer, he will also not be the experiencer of the fruits of action. If he is not the experiencer, he will not be concerned with differentiating things (into desirables and avoidables). He will be even-minded towards all and he will attain Oneness. He will achieve Infinitude. These are the steps he will proceed on. He will finally reach the Supreme Brahman without a body (*videha mukti*).If actions are done avoiding the dangers of differentiation, keeping the eye unswervingly fixed on the Supreme Self, doership will not accrue whether it is a good deed done or even a wrong deed done by mistake.

**43. The Yoga of Non-Attachment**

**यस्य सर्वे समारम्भाः कामसंकल्पवर्जिताः ।**
**ज्ञानाग्निदग्धकर्माणं तमाहुः पण्डितं बुधाः ।।**

*yasya sarve samārambhāḥ kāmasaṃkalpavarjitāḥ* |
*jñānāgnidagdhakarmāṇaṃ tamāhuḥ paṇḍitaṃ budhāḥ* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 54, Sloka 33

(* This verse appears at IV – 19, Bhagavad-Gita).

"The sages call him truly wise, whose undertakings are devoid of any desires and intentions for success. If a work is done by such a person either for the good of the society or for his own living, all his deeds get burnt at the altar of his Self-Knowledge.

**निर्द्वन्द्वो नित्यसत्त्वस्थो निर्योगक्षेम आत्मवान् ।**
**यथाप्राप्तानुवर्ती त्वं भव भूषितभूतलः ।।**

*nirdvandvo nityasattvastho niryogakṣema ātmavān* |

*yathāprāptānuvartī tvaṃ bhava bhūṣitabhūtalaḥ* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 54, Sloka 35

(* The first half of this verse is at II – 45, Bhagavad-Gita in the context of exhorting Arjun to be free of desire and thus achieve abidance in Self-Knowledge. Though the final message is the same, a different approach has been adopted in Yoga Vasishta).

"Shun the mutually conflicting worldly objects that are the cause of happiness and sorrow. Take shelter under the *sāttvic* quality. Acquisition (*yoga*) is to obtain something that was not possessed before. Safekeeping (*kśema*) is to secure what is already possessed. Give up all thoughts concerning acquisition and safekeeping. Be vigilant all the time. These are the cautions you should observe while performing the mandatory works (*svadharma*). Do your work as needed without wanting or rejecting anything. You will then be the salt of the earth!

**कर्मेन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन् ।**
**इन्द्रियार्थान्विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते ।।**
**यस्त्विन्द्रियाणि मनसा नियम्यारभतेऽर्जुन ।**
**कर्मेन्द्रियैः कर्मयोगमसक्तः स विशिष्यते ।।**

*karmendriyāṇi saṃyamya ya āste manasā smaran* |
*indriyārthānvimūḍhātmā mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate* ||
*yastvindriyāṇi manasā niyamyārabhate'rjuna* |
*karmendriyaiḥ karmayogamasaktaḥ sa viśiṣyate* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 54, Sloka 36-37
(* These verses appear at III – 6 & 7, Bhagavad-Gita).

"He, who without taking these precautions, restrains the organs of action and sits spinning thoughts in his mind regarding objects of senses, is a hypocrite and is a person of deluded understanding. In contrast, he who, controlling the senses by the mind, unattached, directs his organs of action to the path of work, excels. He is a true karmayogi.

**आपूर्यमाणमचलप्रतिष्ठं समुद्रमापः प्रविशन्ति यद्वत् ।**
**तद्वत्कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे स शान्तिमाप्नोति न कामकामी ।।**

*apūryamāṇamacalapratiṣṭhaṃ samudramāpaḥ praviśanti yadvat* |
*tadvatkāmā yaṃ praviśanti sarve sa śāntimāpnoti na kāmakāmī* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 54, Sloka 38

(* This verse appears as II – 70, Bhagavad-Gita).

"Restraint of senses by mind does not mean a superficial control. As waters flow into the brimful and still ocean, even so all desires enter the wise man and dissolve in him being unable to arouse him in any manner. He alone and not the desirer of desires, attains peace. He is liberated and not the one who goes on desiring things."

[**Note:** The 54th Sarga closes with this verse. The next Sarga opens once again with Sri Bhagavan's words.]

**Sri Bhagavan:** "Arjun! You ought not to give up enjoyment. You should not think of them as enjoyable at that time. You should take them as they come with a calm mind. You should not neglect the bodily needs of food, water etc. At the same time, do not be habituated to take pleasure in luxuries. You should not care whether you even get your daily requirements or not. You need not lose your peace over them. It is important that you do not take the body subjected to birth and death to be your 'self'. Nothing is lost if you lose the body. If you lose your focus on the Self, everything is lost; but Self is never lost.

**न हि शीर्यत्यचित्तात्मा त्यक्तसर्वपरिग्रहः ।**
**कर्मण्यभिप्रवृत्तोऽपि नैव किंचित्करोति सः ।।**

*na hi śīryatyacittātmā tyaktasarvaparigrahaḥ |*
*karmaṇyabhipravṛtto'pi naiva kiṃcitkaroti saḥ ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 55, Sloka 4

(* The second half of this verse appears in IV – 20, Bhagavad-Gita).

"Mind is the cause for the identification of yourself with the body, senses etc. If you drop all such percepts, what remains is the Self. As long as there is an attachment to the body, senses etc., you mistakenly assume that their end is your own end. If you give up attachment to the body, senses, life-force, mind and I-consciousness, there is no question of annihilation of what remains. The residuum is the Self which is devoid of the mind. Vedas declare for this reason that Self is indestructible.

**अशीर्यो नहि शीर्यते** *aśīryo nahi śīryate*

"An individual in the state of Self without mind may perform any number of acts; still it counts as no work done!

"True doership accrues from a desire for the result of the work, thus opine the learned people. But one thing should be kept in mind. If the ultimate Truth is not clearly understood by a person, his discretion will remain foolish. Even if he is apparently a non-doer of action, he will not be free of desire for the fruits of action. You should not become a prey to such a foolish idea."

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki repeated for emphasis the two verses 29 and 30, Sarga 54 here as verses 5 and 6, Sarga 55.]

"Elders know that Self is imperishable; Self has no beginning and no end; and Self does not age. It is a misunderstanding to attribute any change to Self. This misunderstanding is at the root of all misery. May you be free of such a misunderstanding !

"Noble people who know Self do not think that Self will be destroyed. They contemplate on the Supreme Self identifying themselves with It."

**44. There is No Death**

**Arjun:** "Oh, Lord of the Three Worlds, Oh Teacher of Wisdom! How does it matter for the ignoramus even if they lose the body? After all, Self is the same in every body."

**Sri Bhagavan:** "That's exactly what I have been saying. There is nothing in this world that is destroyed. The only thing that has existence is Self. It does not perish. Where is anything that is destroyed? But everybody in the world keeps making a ruckus that something is born or some other thing is dead. All such hue and cry is out of illusion only. I do not see anything different from Self in the world. All the objects that people talk about look to me to be no more than the sons of a barren woman. Listen,

**नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः ।**
**उभयोरपि दृष्टोऽन्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः ।।**

*nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ* |
*ubhayorapi dṛṣṭo'ntastvanayostattvadarśibhiḥ* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 55, Sloka 12

(* This verse appears at II – 16, Bhagavad-Gita. The first part appeared once earlier at Sarga 54, Sloka 7).

"A non-existent thing never has beingness. An existent thing never loses its beingness. Whatever is, always is. Whatever is not, never exists. Their nature never changes. This is established by knowers of truth. Ignorant ones do not understand this.

**अविनाशि तु तद्विद्धि येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।**
**विनाशमव्ययस्यास्य न कश्चित्कर्तुमर्हति ।।**

*avināśi tu tadviddhi yena sarvamidaṃ tatam* |
*vināśamavyayasyāsya na kaścitkartumarhati* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 55, Sloka 13

(* This verse appears at II – 17, Bhagavad-Gita).

"Know that whatever pervades the whole world is indestructible. It is not only imperishable, it is changeless too. No body can destroy that True substance that is spread everywhere.

**अन्तवन्त इमे देहा नित्यस्योक्ताः शरीरिणः ।**
**अनाशिनोऽप्रमेयस्य तस्माद्युध्यस्व भारत ।।**

*antavanta ime dehā nityasyoktāḥ śarīriṇaḥ* |
*anāśino'prameyasya tasmādyudhyasva bhārata* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 55, Sloka 13

(* This verse appears at II – 18, Bhagavad-Gita).

"The imperishable everlasting true substance is the one who occupies all the bodies in the world. The bodies occupied by Him may perish. But the occupier has neither any limitations nor an end.

"What you consider as your relatives are mere bodies. Because they have no beingness, there is no one who suffers a loss if the bodies are destroyed in the war. Therefore, get on with the war!

"Self is One. There is no second. All the visible objects and bodies are never born as they do not have beingness. The infinite true Self is imperishable.

द्वित्वैकत्वपरित्यागे शेषं यत्परिशिष्यते ।
शान्तं सदसतोर्मध्यं तदस्तीह परं पदम् ।।

*dvitvaikatvaparityāge śeṣaṃ yatpariśiṣyate* |
*śāntaṃ sadasatormadhyaṃ tadastīha paraṃ padam* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 55, Sloka 16

"I said that Self is non-dual. This does not mean that Self has oneness. Oneness is the cause. It is called the 'existence' (*sat*). Duality is the effect. It is 'non-existent'(*asat*). Pure Self lies as the substratum for both. That is the Supreme 'Beingness'. That is the Self. Only That Supreme Beingness is."

**Arjun:** "If Self is undifferentiated, why do people in the world get the feeling that 'I am dead'. How does anyone experience happiness and sorrow when one is alive?"

**Sri Bhagavan:**

भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च ।
एतत्तन्मात्रजालात्मा जीवो देहेषु तिष्ठति ।।

*bhūmirāpo'nalo vāyuḥ khaṃ mano buddhireva ca* |
*etattanmātrajālātmā jīvo deheṣu tiṣṭhati* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 55, Sloka 18

(* The first half of this verse appears at VII – 4, Bhagavad-Gita. The verse in the Bhagavad- Gita refers to eight Prakritis including ego-consciousness. However, the Yogavaasishta verse talks about seven Prakritis only and offers a very intricate explanation).

"Arjun, the mind and intellect take form from the *tanmātras* of the five major elements – earth, water, fire, wind and space. The composite and separate gross and subtle bodies come into existence from the *tanmātras*. When the Supreme Self identifies with the subtle and gross bodies, the concept of an individual (*jīva*) originates. That concept is the source of birth and death as well as happiness and sorrow.

**45. Impressions Make up the World**

"Impressions from past births pull the individual into the affairs of the world. They tie him down to a body. In course of time the body disintegrates. Then the individual leaves the body taking away with him the sense and action organs. The gross body is also a type of impression (*vāsana*). The subtle body is a different type of impression. One is liberated right away, if the impressions that are causal to the subtle body are annihilated. The gross body falls down when the impressions related to it terminate.

In such a case, the subtle body looks for another gross body. When the individual leaves the gross body going in search of another one, the gross body becomes stiff. People give it the name of a corpse. This experience is called 'death.'

"The individual who deserted the earlier body continues to enjoy happiness and sorrow through another body acquired as a result of the impressions. At the very beginning of creation, Hiranyagarbha too generated this world under the influence of the impressions stored in him. Therefore, burn away your old impressions that are the root cause for the origination of the world by achieving Brahman Consciousness through the cultivation of fresh auspicious impressions."

**Arjun:** "My Lord! Maybe the world was an illusion at the time of creation because it was filled with impressions. But in its present state, it shows many things. It gives pleasure and pain. More than anything it is able to create an experience that the world is 'true.' Would it not be proper to describe its present state as real?"

**Sri Bhagavan:** "How can you say that? Everything retains all through its lifetime the same state it had at its birth. If it is true at the time of its birth, it remains true for its entire lifetime. Wherefrom can it acquire reality later on if it was illusory at the time of its origination? That is why I have been exhorting you to get rid of the illusory world that originated because of the past impressions through new impressions obtained from the practice of good contemplation."

**Arjun:** "I agree with the essence of your argument on illusory and real characteristics. But why would the old impressions get destroyed by the new impressions? Old impressions will prevail if they are the stronger ones. The old impressions were that of Hiranyagarbha. They are quite strong. How can the new impressions that I now take up vanquish them?"

**Sri Bhagavan:** "It depends on the strength of your resolve. A seeker with a firm dedication will not give up his goal even if he is thrown over a mountain or blown up by a turbulent wind. Such an individual's effort is bound to succeed."

**Arjun:** "Your statement contradicts what Sages Vyasa and others speak of.

**अज्ञो जन्तुरनीशोयमात्मनास्सुखदुख्योः**
**ईश्वर प्रेरितो गच्छेत स्वर्गं वा नरकं तु वा**

*ajño janturanīśoyamātmanāssukhadukhyoḥ*
*īśvara prerito gaccheta svargaṃ vā narakaṃ tu vā*

A verse cited by the Commentator, Shri ABS.

"The sages say: an individual is ignorant. He has no freedom with respect to the pleasures and pains experienced by him; he will go to heaven or hell as per the decision of the Lord Ishwar. While they speak thus, you pronounce that man's effort is the cause."

**Sri Bhagavan:** "If Ishwar is the creator of the world, the creator of your dream world too should be Ishwar. Does he create the dream world without any basis? Your own impressions

acquired over a long period during the wakeful state and are stored in your memory happen to be the basis for your dreams. Thus the dream world is created by impressions. Extending the logic, one has to admit that impressions of your past lives are the causative base for Ishwar's creation of your wakeful world. That is the reason why I have been exhorting you to annihilate your past impressions."

**Arjun:** "My Lord! How do impressions form? What is the way to get rid of them?"

**Sri Bhagavan:** "There are two main reasons for the formation of impressions: (i) foolishness not to cognize the truth even when it is clearly visible; and (ii) the illusion that makes you forget again and again even after you once understand the truth. Illusion creates the idea that things are Self when they are not really Self. Acquisition of Self-Knowledge is the only way to get rid of the illusion. Arjun, I explained to you already what Self is. You understood the truth. You should now embark upon destruction of your impressions. Give up the ego and attachment. Stop claiming that 'I am so and so' and 'these people are my relatives.'"

**Arjun:** "A thing gets obliterated when the material it is made up of is destroyed. Can a pot be still there if you remove the clay from the pot? An individual is born because of his past impressions. When the impressions are totally eradicated, then there is no scope for the individual to continue to exist. Where is then the question of his attaining something Supreme?"

**Sri Bhagavan:** "What do you take an individual (*jīva*) to be? Do you consider him to be different from the Supreme Self? Your question seems to imply such an assumption. That is not the truth though! An individual is nothing but the Supreme Self contaminated by thoughts and counter thoughts.

Liberation is the state where the pristine unchangeable Pure Self becomes plainly evident when the contamination associated with Him is removed. Oh Brave One! You should experience directly the essence of Truth right in this life. One is liberated when one comes out of the trap of the impressions. A person may be very scholarly or highly righteous, but if he is still caught up in the net of impressions he is just a bird in the cage. He is still bound. The bottom line is accrual of impressions is bondage. Annihilation of impressions is liberation."

[**Note:** The 55th Sarga closes with the above words of Sri Bhagavan. This is the third Sarga on Bhagavad-Gita of Yogavaasishta. Sri Bhagavan talks about 'liberation right in this life' (Jivanmukti) in the next Sarga. There is a debate amongst scholars whether 'liberation while alive' is sanctioned by Vedanta. Sage Valmiki puts an end to the controversy through the words of Sri Bhagavan. We do not find any sentences of the extant Bhagavad-Gita of today in the next Sarga.]

**46. A Wall Painting without a Wall**

**Sri Bhagavan:** "Arjun, attain liberation right in this life through eradication of impressions in your mind. Calm down your mind and discard the blotch of sorrow for your relatives. Be clear on old age and death. Entertain no likes and dislikes in your mind. Keep your mind pure like the sky. Whatever be the actions you are required to take in such a state, they will not affect you.

**प्रवाहपतितं कर्म स्वमेव क्रियते तु यत् ।**
**जीवन्मुक्तस्वभावोऽयं सा जीवन्मुक्तता तथा ।।**

*pravāhapatitaṃ karma svameva kriyate tu yat |*

*jīvanmuktasvabhāvo'yaṃ sā jīvanmuktatā tathā* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 56, Sloka 4

"It is characteristic of a liberated individual to carry on with the deluge of actions that come by him as if those actions are normal to him. To do so is liberation right in this life; but not sitting tight like a log of wood.

"You may raise a question on the difference between a fool and a liberated man if both of them are involved in action. A fool's mind continues to exercise decisions based on desire: 'I want this; I do not want that' and so on. A liberated individual is not concerned with such decisions. He will have equanimity towards everything. That is the critical difference between them. A liberated individual lives in Brahman state as if he is in deep sleep without any affiliation to mind and organs.

"If it so happens that a little bit of remnant mind is left in a liberated individual, that mind will not tolerate any disturbance. In case of any slight disturbance, it will withdraw into the Supreme Brahman. His mind always considers the world as a painting without a canvas. Looked at from such an absolute viewpoint, there is no 'separate' you nor any relations of yours. What is, is Brahman only. Who then is a slayer and who is being slain? Therefore, get rid of the misapprehension. The mind has an inestimable strength. It can show a second as an eon; a mole to be a mountain. It can create a world even without an atom of material.

"Be aware of the strength of the mind and realize that the entire world is no more than a figment of your imagination."

[**Note:** What is given above is the summary of 37 verses. After establishing liberation right in this life in those words, it is necessary to spell out the ways and means to be adopted by a seeker to achieve liberation. Sage Valmiki takes up this new topic for presentation in the next Sarga. Once again the 57th Sarga opens with the words of Sri Bhagavan.]

**Sri Bhagavan:** "As I already said, the world is like a painting without a canvas. What is, is only space.

**सर्वं व्योमकृतं व्योम्ना व्योम्नि व्योम विलीयते ।**
**भुज्यते व्योमनि व्योम व्योम व्योमनि चाततम् ।।**

*sarvaṃ vyomakṛtaṃ vyomnā vyomni vyoma vilīyate* |
*bhujyate vyomani vyoma vyoma vyomani cātatam* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 57, Sloka 4

"What exists is Consciousness-space alone. Consciousness-space makes up everything. It is the substance and substratum of all. Space merges in space. Space experiences space in space! Space permeates space. And that is the world!

"All this happens because of past impressions. A thin thread is able to create a mammoth floral garland by stitching together a string of flowers. Likewise the subtle impressions create the world. But it is like a reflection in a mirror.

"Can you bulldoze the mountain seen in a mirror? Can you burn it or wet it? You

cannot do anything with the virtual image. It is so because the reflection is not independent of the mirror. As long as the mirror is there, the reflection continues. In the same way, what can anybody do with the world that is a reflection in the mirror of Consciousness-space? There is only one way to wipe it out. Only knowledge that the impressions, which beget the reflection called world, are not different from Supreme Brahman, can dissolve the reflection. An individual who is not free from the bondage of impressions is like a lion in a cage irrespective of his being righteous or having yogic achievements.

"Hence, Arjun, never let the seed of impressions remain in you. Even traces of it will engender a maze of worlds. You should burn away the seed of impressions with the fire of pure Knowledge of Brahman. Then the world cannot germinate any more. It will float away untouched like a lotus leaf in a pond. Take notice of my sermon and abide in that state!"

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki used the simile like 'lotus leaf in water' in this description. The same expression was used in V – 10, Bhagavad-Gita in the context of performing actions without attachment. The 57th Sarga ends on this note.]

**Arjun:**

**नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा त्वत्प्रसादान्मयाच्युत ।**
**स्थितोऽस्मि गतसंदेहः करिष्ये वचनं तव ।।**

*naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtirlabdhā tvatprasādānmayācyuta |*
*sthito'smi gatasaṃdehaḥ kariṣye vacanaṃ tava ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 58, Sloka 1

(* This verse appears at XVIII – 73, Bhagavad-Gita. Sri Bhagavan does not continue teaching after this verse in the popular version of Bhagavad-Gita unlike in Yoga Vasishta where He continues His sermon).

"Lord, by your grace I am free of the illusory veil caused by past impressions. I could recall my original nature (Self Knowledge) like remembering the necklace that is already there on the neck. I do not have any further doubts. I shall follow your kind instructions."

**Sri Bhagavan:** "Thought waves such as likes and dislikes in the mind should calm down through Knowledge and not by sleeping over them. Only then will the mind be tranquil. It will be empty of impressions. As a result, Self in the form of the individual will be without any cognizance of the percepts (*chetya*). That is the Supreme state. Vedas too speak of this state in the following manner:

**यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि श्रिताः ।**
**अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते ॥**

*yadā sarve pramucyante kāmā ye'sya hṛdi śritāḥ |*
*atha martyo'mṛto bhavatyatra brahma samaśnute ||*

Kathopanishad VI - 14,

"An individual susceptible to repetitious deaths becomes Immortal Brahman when the modifications of the mind caused by impressions are destroyed. He will attain the Supreme Brahman state right here and right now.

"Hey Arjun! Take refuge under the mantra of desirelessness. Cure the highly toxic disease called impressions of objects residing in your inner organ (*antahkarana*). Get rid of worldly fears. You, yourself, become God!"

**Vasishta:** "Rama! In reply to these words of Sri Bhagavan, Arjun, the son of Pandu, once again confirmed that all his doubts had been cleared. He took up his arms (Gandiva, a bow) and readied himself to fight in the war having Sri Bhagavan as his charioteer."

[**Note:** The 58th Sarga ends at this point. Sage Vasishta's sermon on Bhagavad-Gita too comes to an end. We notice that about 20 verses of the popular Bhagavad-Gita appear in Yogavaasihta Gita without much change. These verses or parts of them come from Chapters 2-6, 9-10, 12-14 and 18 of Bhagavad-Gita. Many of them are from the second chapter of Gita. We may consider the Yogavaasishta Gita to be a concise summary of non- dualistic interpretation of Bhagavad-Gita. If we set aside for a while questions about authorship and period of the work, the Yogavaasishta Gita provides an illuminating viewpoint to Sri Bhagavan's teaching to Arjun. However, we could not completely cover the full Gita of Yogavaasishta. We touched on the salient aspects of Yogavaasishta Gita because Bhagavad-Gita is a world renowned classic. A comparative study of both the Gitas may bring to light many valuable concepts.

Coming back to Yoga Vasishta:

Sage Vasishta covered thus far in the Chapter Nirvana of Yogavaasishta, three principal teachings: Methods of Yoga through the Story of Bhusunda; Method of Worship through the Story of Shiva; and Method of Detachment through the Story of Arjun.

Next follows the Story of **चूडाल** *Cūḍāla* , the main theme of the current chapter. As a prequel to this story, he gives a prolonged introduction through a variety of minor stories and discussions extending to 18 Sargas. The 59th Sarga contains a few techniques useful for the achievement of 'liberation right in this life.' In this context, he notionally divides Consciousness Self into two types. We shall now continue with Sage Vasishta's discourse.]

**47. Orientation Required for the Attainment of "Liberation Right in This Life"**

**Vasishta:** "Rama! We may conveniently divide Consciousness Self into two types. One is Essentially Perceptible Form (*cetyārtha pradhana rūpa*). The other is Pure Consciousness Form (*kevala samvid rūpa*).

"Essentially Perceptible Form refers to the appearance of Pure Consciousness as mind, modification of mind, and reflection in the modification of mind. Perfect Consciousness Form refers to Pure Consciousness remaining as witness to all the forms of the first type. The main technique of achieving liberation in this life is to keep the eye focused on that single common thing which exists in both forms. The important point to be noted is that such a focus has to be maintained in your thought and not in action. Retaining the focus in thought is called Contemplative Non-dualism (*bhāva advaita*). If it is in action it is called Performance Non-dualism (*kriya advaita*). You should pursue the Contemplative Non- dualism without break. Never touch the Performance Non-dualism even by mistake. Elders recite a very standard verse in this connection:

**भावाद्वैतं सदा कुर्यात् कृयाद्वैतं न कर्हिचित्**
**अद्वैतं त्रिषुलोकेषु नाद्वैतं गुरूना सह**

*bhāvādvaitaṃ sadā kuryāt kṛyādvaitaṃ na karhicit*
*advaitaṃ triṣulokeṣu nādvaitaṃ gurūnā saha*

A verse quoted by Shri ABS at Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 59, Sloka 16

"Take resort always to Contemplative Non-dualism. Do not maintain non-duality in actions. Identify yourself with everything in all the three worlds. But do not identify yourself with your Guru.

"Because there is nothing else in the world other than Pure Brahman, ever stay with the feeling that everything that you notice is a form of Brahman whether it is a tree or a heap of rocks in the world. While such thoughts go on, do not behave with a tree in the way that you would do with a rock. If one is fully immersed in Contemplative Non-dualism, he will be absorbed in deep meditation (*samādhi*). He will not perform any actions. If he is acting, it implies that his mind is to some extent cognizant of external things. If such an individual makes a mess of all his actions confusing one with another object, calling everything to be Brahman, that will be merely empty words. Because there are still some seeds of dualistic vision in him, he will be depraved by coming in contact with actions and he will also ruin other persons near him. Hence Performance Non-dualism is a firm no no.

"Now that things in all the worlds are non-different from Self, he should contemplate on the fact that 'I am Brahma, I am Vsihnu, I am Shiva etc.' In case he meets with actual god Brahma and recognizes Him to be so, he should prostrate to Him; but should not demand that Brahma should bow down to him simply because both are Brahman. That would be Performance Non-dualism.

"A seeker has to be doubly careful with respect to the Guru. He should not even imagine non-difference from the Guru. As long as he is able to see the body of Guru to be separate, he should keep the Guru on a higher adorable pedestal. Any inadvertence on this aspect will lead to the pollution of the seeker's mind and eventually results in a loss of Knowledge.

"It is enough to keep observing the above precautions and understand Self. Impressions pertaining to experiences will disintegrate under the power of Knowledge. One important criterion to achieve liberation is not to entertain thoughts of any experience even in the mind.

"In order to get rid of the desire for experiencing, you must realize that: 'I am the Self that is in every body.' Such a realization in turn can be obtained by giving up the sense of separation, thinking that 'I am this body, I am this organ and so on.'

**Rama:** "In that case, suppose a person takes courage and chops off his hands, legs and so on. Will he be able to see the Self in all?"

**Vasishta:** "No, that would be foolish. What is desirable is to see Self in all. If a person keeps his separate identity and continues to take actions, he will not be able to see Self in all. In the example you gave, say the person severed his leg because he felt that 'my leg is coming in my way to see Self in all and therefore, I should cut it.'

The cutting off of his leg will fall under Performance Non-duality and not Contemplative Non-dualism. We have already declared that Performance Non-duality is inadvisable.

"Action arises when there is a modification in the mind (a thought wave). Intention is associated with such thought waves. Pure Consciousness is the only thing that is devoid of any modifications. Pure Consciousness is the place where all movements in the mind are dissolved. Concentrate on that. It is also called 'Common Beingness (**सत्ता सामान्य** *sattā sāmānya*). It is nothing but Common Beingness which experiences and enjoys the world in different forms – from that of a tiny critter to Brahma, Vishnu, Ishwar. Taittiriya Upanishad described this in terms of human pleasure, pleasure of Gandharwas etc. These are all manifestations of Common Beingness. It is enough if you can meditate on Common Beingness even for a minute in order to be liberated. You may function in a variety of ways after that. You will not have any sorrow."

**Rama:** "Sir! Is the Common Beingness that you are talking about 'a thing' that results after the mind, intellect, memory etc. are severed? Or is it something that has all those descriptors? I seek a clarification because if it is without attributes, it is not possible for it to manifest in different forms. If it is with attributes, it is not possible to attain the state of sorrowlessness."

**Vasishta:** "What remains after the perceivable creation is dissolved is the Common Beingness without descriptors. As long as the world continues to be there, it is Common Beingness with descriptors that exists in the form of multiple manifestations. Individual beingness (**जीव सत्त** *jīva satta*) consists of a multitude of individuals that exist with different minds. What exists in the form of an aggregate mind is **ईश्वर् सत्त** *īśvar satta.* We cannot fragment things in the aggregate mind into those with descriptors and without descriptors.

"Water spray, small ripples and huge waves occur on the ocean surface. Waves have bubbles and spume. These are all forms of water. Will you call the water in them to be with descriptors or without descriptors? It is neither. Water is common. In the same way what you see as objects, organs, elements, qualities, time and so on and on are multiplicities of Common Beingness. My instruction is that you should meditate on the Common Beingness and be liberated."

**48. Residual Effects of Action are the Cause for Experiencing the World**

**Rama:** "Great Teacher! You say that the whole world is a manifestation of the Supreme Self. But manifestation is only an illusory creation. It is equivalent to a dream. If it is like a dream, every one should experience it to be so. You indicated earlier that gods like Brahma and others get similar experience. But ordinary persons like me lack such an experience. The visible world full of objects appears to be real to us. When we inquire about the reason for such an appearance, you say that it is due to the fact that we were habituated for a long time in looking at it as real. Forget me for a moment. If you consider God Brahma, he has been looking at the world for a much longer time. Hence he should be affected far more intensely by the habit of looking. But the world does not look to be any more real to him. Why ?"

**Vasishta:** "The reality of the world does not arise merely from looking at it. The 'thought' that the world is real has to be operating in you for a long time. That happens to ordinary folk.

Though Brahma has been looking at the world for a long time, he does not look at it with the thought that it is real. Its reality is contradicted in his way of looking. He witnesses the world, being aware that nescience which is the cause for the appearance of the world too is untrue.

"Suppose you know that it is a rope and not a snake. Will you imagine it to be a snake simply because it continues to appear like a snake from one of the angles? Brahma too witnesses the world recognizing the fact that the world appears to be real though untrue. Such witnessing will never result in taking the world to be real."

**Rama:** "If Brahma and other gods are aware of the essence of this truth, why do not they have an experience that the world does not exist?"

**Vasishta:** "Balance of residual 'karma' from past actions is the reason for experiencing happiness and sorrow.

"How long does a character in your dream continue? The dream world for that character extends as long as the effects of his past actions last. Putting it differently, the dream does not break as long as the character's residual 'karma' persists."

"Even for Brahma, balance of his residual 'karma' (*prārabdha,* current suffrage) is the reason for his continued experience of the world."

[**Note:** A discussion on the dream character came earlier in the Section: The King from the Dream, 13th Sarga in Chapter: Creation, Part II of our Series.]

**Rama:** "What is the difference between an ordinary person and Brahma then?"

**Vasishta:** "There is only one important difference. An ordinary person experiences the world under the misapprehension that the world is real whereas Brahma experiences the world knowing that it is unreal.

"We should take into account another crucial point here. We have been discussing the issue based on the assumption that the creation of Brahma lasts for a long time. Strictly speaking, the concept of 'time' is applicable to an ignorant person and not to an individual knowing Self. Even an ignorant person sees a long dream in a short span of time. I talked about it in great detail in the Section: The Story of Lavana in the Chapter on Creation.

"Another thing you have to bear in mind is that a long period of time for us like a kalpa (4.32 billion earth years) may not amount to be more than a fraction of second for the Creator. Viewed thus, we cannot say that the Creator had a long period of practice noticing the world.

**न निरोधो न चोत्पत्तिर्न बद्धो न च साधकः ।**
**न मुमुक्षुर्न वै मुक्त इत्येषा परमार्थता ॥**

*na nirodho na cotpattirna baddho na ca sādhakaḥ |*
*na mumukṣurna vai mukta ityeṣā paramārthatā ||*

(This mantra is found in Tripura Taapini Upanishad, Atma Upanishad, Avadhoota Upanishad, Amritabindu Upanishad and also in Gaudapada Karika II – 32).

"There is neither Dissolution nor Creation. There is neither bondage nor seeker for freedom. There is neither any one wishing for salvation nor any one who achieved it."

**Rama:** "If the world is so empty, how does anything happen?"

**Vasishta:** "That is not a valid question. No answer can be given why something appears in a dream. What laws can govern imagination? Boon fulfilling Trees and Powerful Gems that grant our wishes are all part of such fancies.

Suppose your wish runs as follows: May I attain salvation! May Brahman be destroyed! May the world be unchanging! May comforts and luxuries be forever! No Boon fulfilling Tree or Powerful Gem can grant such desires. What you may not have noticed in the world can sometimes appear in your imagination.

**अचेतनोऽपि कुरुते कर्म यन्त्रपुमानिव ।**

*acetano'pi kurute karma yantrapumāniva* |

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 61, Sloka 25

"Normally only living objects would perform actions. But in one's imagination inert substances too may act like a mechanical man.

[**Note:** A reference to a 'mechanical man' in the above verse could possibly hint at the existence of such capability during the times of the Yoga Vasishta to design/use them.]

"Rama! The fact of the matter is people fancy many things.

**भ्रमाद्भ्रमान्तरं गच्छन्स्वप्नात्स्वप्नान्तरं व्रजन् ।**
**अतिस्थिरप्रत्ययभागिह जीवो विमुह्यति ।।**

*bhramādbhramāntaraṃ gacchansvapnātsvapnāntaraṃ vrajan* |
*atisthirapratyayabhāgiha jīvo vimuhyati* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 61, Sloka 30

"An individual believes that he is steady while he keeps continuously moving from one imagination to another and from one fantasy to another. Such belief itself is an illusion. I shall narrate a story that explains this fact very well."

**49. The Story of Yatīśvar / The story of जीवट Jīvaṭa / The Story of hundred Rudras**

[Note: This is a strange story with many twists and turns. Sage Vasishta makes a reference to this again in the second half of the current Chapter: Nirvana. Hence, the story deserves an in-depth study.]

**Vasishta**: "Once upon a time there lived a pious saint. He achieved control of inner organs by giving up desires and by restraining external organs. He practiced deep meditation scrupulously observing the prescribed orders of sainthood. However, he was not totally successful in achieving stable *samādhi*. He had to struggle in order to be continuously in deep meditation.

"After a long time had gone by thus, he thought that normal householders were better

off than he was and wished that he too should become a householder. But by that time itself his mind was quite purified, focused and strongly meditative. Hence he assumed mentally the form of a householder. He christened that form as 'Jīvaṭa.'

"Jīvaṭa needed an address to stay. So he constructed a big city. Jīvaṭa settled in a mansion in that city. He drank and dined sumptuously. He got inebriated and fell asleep. He dreamt in his sleep that he was a well-learned but poor Vedic pundit under the influence of his past tendencies. The poverty-stricken Brahmin Pundit recited Vedas continuously.

He got tired and slept. Though he was a pauper, he dreamt that he was a satrap king. The satrap was forever in competition with the monarch. So the satrap dreamt that he was the monarch. The dream monarch was dauntless. He was not afraid of wars. He spent his life in enjoyment and luxuries. He used to feel that human beauties were inadequate to his stature and therefore, fantasized heavenly beauties. Because of this he himself became an *Apsarasa* (celestial courtesan) in his dream. The *Apsarasa* lady was obsessed with beauty. She did not like the features of any other lady. She used to imitate the glances of a doe. Thinking about a doe intensely, she became a doe in a dream of hers. The doe fancied about creepers that were unreachable to her. The doe became a creeper in its dream.

"Rama, you need not doubt if animals would dream.

**तिर्यञ्चोऽपि प्रपश्यन्ति स्वप्नं चित्तस्वभावतः ।**
**दृष्टानां च श्रुतानां च चेतःस्मरणमक्षतम् ।।**

*tiryañco'pi prapaśyanti svapnaṃ cittasvabhāvataḥ* |
*dṛṣṭānāṃ ca śrutānāṃ ca cetaḥsmaraṇamakṣatam* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 62, Sloka 18

"Animals too have dreams. Dreams are a characteristic of the mind. To reminisce about what is seen or heard is a quality of not only human beings but also animals. Dreams are a type of remembering!

"After a while, the creeper went into deep sleep (*suśupti*) and remained like a statue without movement. When the inner tendencies became active again, it had a dream. As a creeper, it has two tendencies: (i) A fear that it may be severed; and (ii) fancy for the beauty of the bees alighting on it. Because of the fear of being severed, it had a dream that it was cut off and almost dead. As it lost a specific shape for itself in its dream, it was confused and went into deep sleep. The second tendency got activated after a time. It had another dream because of the second tendency. It became a dragon fly in the dream. The dragon fly was fond of lotuses. So it alighted on a lotus. It forgot itself enjoying the nectar from the flower. An elephant plucked the flower at that time and chewed it away. The dragon fly couldn't escape. Its thoughts were filled with the scary elephant as it was being crushed between the teeth of the elephant.

**भ्रमरो वारणालोकाद्वारणालोकभावनात् ।**
**ददर्शात्मानमामोदमत्तहस्तितयोदितम् ।।**

*bhramaro vāraṇālokādvāraṇālokabhāvanāt* |
*dadarśātmānamāmodamattahastitayoditam* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 62, Sloka 27

"Under the power of its imagination as an elephant, it looked as if it became an elephant.

"The elephant was taken as the war-elephant of a king. The elephant exuded secretions of its heat a lot. So many dragon flies started to trouble the elephant. The elephant thought of the dragon flies all the time. The elephant was killed in a war one day. Because its mind was occupied with dragon flies at the time of its death, it was reborn as a dragon fly.

"The dragon fly got crushed under the feet of an elephant when it was flying near the banks of a pond. The dragon fly's mind was focused on the swans in the pond at the time of its death. It was therefore reborn as a swan. During its life as a swan, it heard about the greatness of the swans that served as the vehicle for Brahma. It had a wish to be one of them. It died later out of some disease. Because of its strong thoughts regarding the swan-vehicle of Brahma at the time of its death, it became the vehicle swan of Brahma in its next birth.

"As Brahma's vehicle, the swan heard the teachings of Brahma on Truth. It gained Wisdom from this knowledge. It stayed there for good. It was ready to receive *videhamukti* (liberation without the body) along with Brahma at the end of Brahma's period (*kalpa*).

"The swan that almost got liberated along with Brahma happened to visit Kailash (abode of Shiva) accompanying Brahma. It was dazzled to see the wealth of Rudras there, and wished to be a Rudra. No sooner than the thought occurred, it became a Rudra as fast as a mirror reflecting an object."

**Rama:** "Teacher! You said that the swan attained liberation right in its life. How could a liberated being have further desires? How could it have past tendencies or rebirths? Or is it your stand that its current suffrage (*prārabdha*) had an inbuilt component of becoming Rudra and the current suffrage would not be fulfilled unless it takes on the life of a Rudra? Do you mean to suggest that other celebrated people also had to undergo the effects of current suffrage even after attaining liberation while living as in the case of Bharata as it is often quoted: '*Bharatasya tri janmabhih*' (Bharata would attain liberation without body after going through three more births)? Such a stand will not be tenable here.

"If that were to be the reason, you would not have stated that the swan had desired to become Rudra after seeing him and therefore it became Rudra. Further, Rudra is not an ordinary human being. One may obtain human form or godly form as a result of his past actions. But it is not possible to attain Rudrahood through actions. To be a Rudra is to be Ishwar. So what you say does not seem to gel."

**Vasishta:** "There appears to be a problem because you consider Rudra to have another birth. It is not a new birth. It is liberation with form (**सारूप्य मुक्ति** *sārūpya mukti*). The swan obtained liberation from being proximal to Brahma (**ब्रह्म सामीप्य मुक्ति** *brahma sāmīpya mukti).*

Now because of the thoughts of Rudra, it obtained liberation from having a similar form to that of Rudra (**रुद्र सारूप्य मुक्ति** *rudra sārūpya mukti*). An individual who attained liberation while still living (*jīvanmukta*) can assume a new form with his powers of thought prompted by a desire arising out of his balance of current suffrage. Such a new form will not amount to a new birth. The swan's case is also the same.

"It is true, as you said, one cannot get Ishwarhood as a result of actions. One cannot obtain complete Ishwarhood by actions; but one can obtain a status equivalent to Ishwar. The

Vedas too declare:

**देवो भूत्वा देवानाप्येति** *devo bhūtvā devānāpyeti*

"He becomes a god and joins gods."

**Rama:** "Sir, what is the difference between to be an Ishwar and to have a similar form to that of Ishwar?"

**Vasishta:** "Ishwarhood is concerned with the official functions of dissolution of the universe etc. One who has merely **सारूप्य मुक्ति** *sārūpya mukti* with *īśvar* will have the wealth of knowledge of an Ishwar but no executive powers. What the swan attained here was only **सारूप्य मुक्ति** *sārūpya mukti* with *īśvar"*

**Rama:** "Okay, now I am clear. Let us proceed with the story."

**Vasishta:** "The swan continued to live in the Rudra world in the form of a Rudra. With its powers of clairvoyance, it recollected the sequence of its past dreams. It thought within itself thus:

**अहो तु चित्रा मायेयं तता विश्वविमोहिनी ।**
**असत्यैवापि सद्रूपा मरुभूमिषु वारिवत् ।।**

*aho tu citrā māyeyaṃ tatā viśvavimohinī* |
*asatyaivāpi sadrūpā marubhūmiṣu vārivat* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 63, Sloka 7

"Wow! How strange is this magical illusion! Though it is entirely untrue, it appears to be real like a mirage in the desert. It pervades the entire world and deludes it.

"To start with I was an absolute Consciousness Self. I became the mind due to contact with illusion. Then I became a thought. Under the power of thought, I attained the form of the world. I became an individual (*jīva*). I started experiencing the beginningless cycles of births and deaths. In one of my lives, I was a holy saint. After that I became Jivata. Then I had several births and I came to this position. From the time of being a holy saint up to now, it has taken four hundred yugas and one thousand years."

[**Note:** In order to appreciate the meaning of some of the original verses here, we should depend on the detailed comments of Shri ABS, the commentator. Otherwise, the full import of the verses will be lost. We shall continue the narration in the form of a dialogue incorporating the explanations of Shri ABS.]

**50. Virtuous Impressions are Mightier**

**Rama:** "Revered Teacher! According to you, virtuous impressions will devour detrimental impressions some time or the other . Can the reverse also take place, the inauspicious impressions swallowing away the virtuous impressions?"

[**Note:** The same question was discussed a couple of times previously. Sage Vasishta explained earlier that the detrimental impressions were sustained by untruth and hence were

weak. Virtuous impressions derive their strength from scriptures. He gives a different reasoning here.]

**Vasishta:** "Rama, there is a secret here. The inauspicious impressions are causal to bondage. But they do not have the strength to counteract virtuous impressions. Virtuous Impressions are natural to an individual. Inauspicious impressions appear intermittently and block the virtuous impressions. Therefore, the inauspicious impressions are inherently weak.

The virtuous impressions are totally opposite to the inauspicious impressions. Because the inauspicious impressions are unnatural, the virtuous impressions will stand their ground, vanquish the inauspicious impressions and rescue the individual."

**Rama:** "If the virtuous impressions are inherited in an individual, they have to win finally. That being the case, why should I make an effort on my own? Why should scriptures ordain me to take action?"

**Vasishta:** "Virtuous impressions cannot by themselves surmount the blocks, however natural and strong they may be. Individual effort is required. Adoring gods etc. is quite an illusory action in the world. But such an effort does yield good results. Do you think listening to scriptures, reflection and contemplation on the Supreme Truth will not yield good results? These efforts are very fruitful.

"Now, let us come back to our story. Rudra, traveling thus in his memory lane, desired to see his old body when he was a saint. He went to the place where the saint had been living. The saint's body was asleep then. Rudra linked the sleeping body with a part of his mind and a part of his knowledge of truth (**चेतसा चेतनेन च** *cetasā cetanena ca*, Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 63, Sloka 38). The body of the saint awoke and sat up. The saint noticed Rudra in front of him. He could understand that it was him himself. Under the influence of the Rudra part that had entered him, he could recollect the series of his births from Jivata to Rudra.

"The saint obtained complete Self Knowledge with this recollection. So he did not find a reason to be surprised by the differences in the illusory forms. Even then, he was a bit surprised to see the body of a saint on one hand and that of Rudra on the other."

[**Note:** The reader should take note of an important point here. The saint had a series of dream lives. The body of Rudra broke his dream. Suppose a lion seen in a dream breaks the dream; we cannot see the dream lion any more after waking up. But the saint in our story continued to see the body of Rudra even after he woke up. He could remember the bodies of Jivata and others. Shri ABS, the commentator, provided the following explanation for this. In the series of the dream lives Rudra achieved liberation while alive (*jīvanmukti*). Hence Rudra attained the capacity to fructify whatever he thinks (*satya sankalpa siddhi*). Because of the power of Rudra's thought, the body did not disappear like that of a dream lion. Further, the saint had also got residual karma of having to witness many of his bodies at one time as a carry forward of his past actions.

Therefore, he recollected the bodies of Jivata and others and also directly noticed the body of Rudra. He was surprised a bit at the twists within the balance of his past karma.

Sukra, the son of Bhrigu too had a similar experience as was narrated in the 15th Sarga of the Chapter: Sustenance. Sukra's old body was dead. But because of his fancy for the old body, he entered into it and burnt away the later body. In the present story of the saint, the

saint is living in two bodies at the same time. We feel it is impossible. But we have been doing it ourselves in our dreams. The dream character lives not only as the king but also as his enemy. Who are these two persons other than the dreamer himself? Are they all not one? Sage Vasishta depicts a similar scene in the wakeful state. This is the difference between the Story of Sukra and that of the saint.]

**Vasishta:** "Rama! The holy saint and Rudra looked at each other for a little while. Both of them thought at the same time that they should go to Jivata. They both started on their journey. They crossed their universe and entered into another. They searched to locate the correct planet, country, town and house. They finally found Jivata. (We notice a similar description in the story of Leela, Chapter: Creation). Jivata was an ignorant person. But the saint and Rudra were knowledgeable people, liberated with body and were residents of another universe. Hence they were invisible to Jivata. Jivata was on his death bed by the time these two people went there. The two godly people together conflated Jivata's mind and knowledge of truth with their own mind and knowledge of truth (**चेतसा चेतनेन च** *cetasā cetanena ca*, Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 63, Sloka 44). Jivata also became a knowledgeable individual (*jnāni*) with that. Jivata could see both of them. All the three were surprised to look at each other.

"Three of them thought of meeting the Brahmin, the reincarnated form of Jivata in the latter's next birth. They went to another universe and found the Brahmin's house. The Brahmin was fast asleep, tightly holding his wife when the three reached his place.

The three of them conflated their mind and knowledge of truth with that of the Brahmin. As a result, there are now four of them.

` "The four of them thought of going to the mansion of the satrap king. They followed the same process there too. With the conflation of the mind and knowledge of truth, the king got up. Now the group is five strong. Then they left for the residence of the emperor. There they became six. Thus travelling from one place after another, they became 100 strong. Every one of the hundred people was Self knowing (*jnāni*). Each one is a Rudra. They comprise the hundred Rudras.

**एकसंविद्भिन्नतनु चित्रचेष्टितवेष्टितम् ।**
**एकरूपमनेकाभं रूपं तत्पारमेश्वरम् ।।**

*ekasaṃvidbhinnatanu citraceṣṭitaveṣṭitam* |
*ekarūpamanekābhaṃ rūpaṃ tatpārameśvaram* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 63, Sloka 57

"Consciousness is One. But there are a multitude of bodies with strangely varying behaviors. Form is one; but there are multiple manifestations. This is the quality of *īśvar* (Brahman with attributes).

**सहस्राणि सहस्रसो ये रुद्रा अधिभूम्यां**

*sahasrāṇi sahasraso ye rudrā adhibhūmyāṃ*

(Rudra Canto, Krishna Yajurveda.)

"There are thousands of Rudras on the earth, says the Krishna Yajurveda. The state of those Rudras is akin to this. Consciousness is One. There are many bodies. If the well known Rudras as per the Vedas are a thousand, the hundred saintly Rudras comprise the 11th hundred."

**Rama:** "Quite interesting indeed! But I have a question. Why is it that I am unable to witness all of my dream births like the saint could?"

**Vasishta:** "Only such a body and world are experienced that corresponds to the past tendency which sprouts up at a given time. In our current story, the thought of Rudra joined with that of the saint. As a result all the tendencies germinated simultaneously. This happens only to the Knowers of Truth."

**Rama:** "Was there an experience of happiness and sorrow later on in Jivata and others?"

**Vasishta:** "The hundred Rudras felt happy looking at each other. The first Rudra who started it all desired to send the rest of the 99 Rudras to their respective places. He therefore, addressed them in the following words:

'Hey Jivas! Please proceed now to your respective places. Complete the balance of your current suffrage (*prārabdha*). Come to my world then and become members of my group of Pramathas. You shall attain liberation without body (*videha kaivalya*) along with me at the time of Great Dissolution!'

"With these words of the first Rudra, the rest of them felt as if they just woke up from sleep. They went to their respective places and fulfilled the balance of their actions and finally reached the world of Rudras."

**51. No Difference Between The Creatures of Dream and Wakeful States**

**Rama:** "Sir, so far you spoke as if Jivata and others were the imaginary entities of the holy saint. Now your story appears to project them as real living beings. How can the conjectural beings obtain real existence?"

**Vasishta:** "Your question betrays your wrong assumption. You seem to think that men in the wakeful state are real and those in the imaginary and dream states are unreal. It is not correct and hence you should change that idea.

**आदावन्ते च यन्नास्ति वर्तमानेपि तत्तथा**

*ādāvante ca yannāsti vartamānepi tattathā*

"Whatever does not exist at the beginning and at the end, that is to say what lacked existence in the past and will not exist in the future, is non-existent even in the present time.

"The above is an important axiom and should never be forgotten. As per this rule, none of the people, whether in a wakeful state or imaginary state or dream state have any sort of reality. They appear to have existence simply because of the Beingnes of the substratum. If you speak from the position of the Absolute, no thing in the world ever has non-existence. Everything is True from the Absolute point of view.

"Each individual sees a particular world to be true as a function of his residual

impressions. I talked about it earlier too."

**Rama:** "If that is the case, the hundred Rudras have to see their own separate world as real depending on their respective impressions. How could they each see the other?"

**Vasishta:** "Under the conditions of composite residual impressions, such events can take place in two ways:

1. It could happen when a seeker matures in his spiritual path (Yoga).
2. It could happen due to the power of their thought which comes naturally to individuals like Rudras.

"Yoga is possible with concentration of the mind. In fact an individual sees a world because of his focused mind. Capacity to focus comes out of his past impressions. Hence he sees only such a world that is commensurate with his past impressions. In contrast, if a seeker practices concentration of the mind, he will attain many accomplishments (*siddhis*). Such an individual will be able to perform many actions that are otherwise impossible for an ordinary person. We have many examples like Kaarta Viiryaarjun and others with such attainments. A Yogi may also be able to gather together all his dream personalities at one place.

"In our story, the hundred Rudras could assemble together at a place because of the power of the first Rudra,. Because of his thoughts only, all the Rudras left for their respective places. The exact same thing happens with every individual in this world. Every individual will have certain thoughts at the time of his death. He will experience different worlds in accordance with his thoughts and forgets the previous experiences. He thinks that those worlds which he is experiencing currently are his wakeful and real worlds. He thinks of something else in that wakeful state before going to sleep. Soon he witnesses some dream worlds. He moves from one dream to another dream. He calls some of these dreams as wakeful states. He feels that it is the natural course of things. It goes on like this till he is liberated. I exemplified this point through the story of the holy saint."

**52. Was the Saint of the Story Real ?**

**Rama:** "Teacher, all this sounds quite surprising! Is the holy saint in this story a fictitious character or a true one? If he is true, is he liberated now or he is still living as an unliberated individual (*jīva*)?"

**Vasishta:** "I shall let you know tomorrow after I find it out with my clairvoyance during my meditation tonight. It is already noon now. We have to attend to our obligatory ablutions. Let us meet tomorrow."

[Sage Vasishta ended the day's discourse with those words. He did not hold class in the evening in order to let Rama review his lessons. He commenced his teachings the next morning.]

**Vasishta:** "Rama! I went into meditation last night for a long time. I saw a country called 'Jini' north of India. Nearby I saw another country called 'Vihara'."

[**Note:** 'Jini' may correspond to the present China. 'Vihara' can be Bukhara in Afghanistan. Linguistic experts opine that Bukhara can be a colloquial transformation of Vihara.]

"I noticed the holy saint a bit aged with red hair. He was trying to go into deep meditation. He planned to go into deep meditation for 21 days. He closed himself in a room with that purpose. He instructed everybody in his household not to disturb him. His family members too were very protective of him. He observed deep meditation for about a thousand years during the last kalpa. Presently he is again going for 21 days of deep meditation (*samādhi*).

"I looked around to see if similar individuals are present anywhere else. I searched in many universes. I did find a similar man at one place. But as it was almost dawn, I stopped my investigation and returned. Who can for sure say how many such holy saints exist in the billions and billions of the universes?

"You asked me about the whereabouts of the holy saint. I found three such holy saints so far if you include the last kalpa also. One cannot for sure say whether they are three separate beings or just one. We may consider all of them to be one only because of the similarity in looks. Not only that holy saint, but also several others like Narad, Vyasa, Suka, Pulastya, Pulaha, Agastya, Bhrighu, Angeerasa and so on have been living with about the same qualities and looks in many different periods (*kalpas*). All this goes to prove, once again, that the entire world is no more than a phantasm."

**Dasarath** (Rama's father who was also present in the session): "Revered Saint! Respected Guru! If you permit me, I shall dispatch my men to Vihara (country) to bring the holy saint to our place here."

**Vasishta:** "My Dear King, it is not possible. He is just skin and bones now. He will not live long. He will become a swan in his next birth and serve Brahma as his vehicle. He will achieve liberation while living in that life. So your effort will not be useful.

"But the main purpose of my description of this story is only to substantiate the fact that individuals (*jīvas*) keep moving from one fantasy to another. I talked about one saint becoming one hundred Rudras. In order to reply to Rama's question about the whereabouts of the holy saint, I used my clairvoyance to find out and ascertained that that saint could be living simultaneously in many universes in many forms. When I told you the story of Bhargava, we did mention the series of births of a single individual; but we did not discuss the possibility of the same individual being present at the same time in different worlds in multiple forms. We discussed such a possibility here.

"We cannot talk of identicalness or diversity of these forms with certainty. All the forms are mere reflections. Reflection implies virtual appearance (appearance of something that is really not there). They could be multiple reflections! What is important is to avoid the modifications of the mind, the root cause of such imagination and fragmentation."

**स्पन्दास्पन्दौ कल्पनाकल्पना वा**
**चित्ताम्नायो विद्धि नामाब्धिनाम्ना ।**
**सर्वाकारा निर्वृतिः शान्तिसत्ता**
**पूर्णापूर्णे ह्येकमेवास्थितेति ।।**

*spandāspandau kalpanākalpanā vā*
*cittāmnāyo viddhi nāmābdhināmnā* |
*sarvākārā nirvṛtiḥ śāntisattā*
*pūrṇāpūrṇe hyekamevāsthiteti* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 67, Sloka 36

(This is the last verse of the 67th Sarga).

"Rama, May You be an Ocean of Bliss! Realize in that state that all modifications of the mind like arousal or no arousal, imagination or no imagination, thoughts or counter thoughts are nothing but the forms of the infinite beatitude. Understand that Supreme Calmness alone abides in all these forms. Practice 'the silence of deep sleep' in order to obtain it."

**53. The Silence of Deep Sleep**

**Rama:** "Revered Teacher! I still have a few questions on the story of holy saints. But before we take them up, let me ask you another question. You have just now mentioned the phrase 'silence of deep sleep'. This is a new terminology. I knew about silence of speech, silence of senses and rock like silence. Will you please explain what 'silence of deep sleep' is?"

**Vasishta:** "Essentially, there are two types of Silent Saints. One is a Saint statue like silence. Another is the Liberated silent Saint.

"Saint of Statue-like silence controls the organs practicing difficult vows like Krichra Chaandrayana rituals (consisting of very strict fastings). Such an individual is not much concerned about Self inquiry. Liberated Silent Saint has an external appearance of an ordinary person but is actually a Knower of Truth. He is ever immersed internally in Supreme Bliss. Yet both of them have a firm determination in their mind. Silence is the name for such a determination of the mind.

**चतुष्प्रकारमाहुस्तं मौनं मौनविदो जनाः ।**
**वांग्मौनमक्षमौनं च काष्ठं सौषुप्तमेव च ।।**

*catuṣprakāramāhustaṃ maunaṃ maunavido janāḥ* |
*vāṃgmaunamakṣamaunaṃ ca kāṣṭhaṃ sauṣuptameva ca* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 68, Sloka 7

Silence is of four types. They are:

1. Silence of Speech - no talking.
2. Silence of Organs - control of organs.
3. Statue like Silence - eschewing works that involve the body.

These three relate to the Saint of statue like silence.

4. Silence of Deep Sleep - this is the unwavering state of mind after obtaining Self Knowledge. It is also called the Fourth Silence or *turīya* Silence. It can be achieved only by *jīvanmukta(s)*.

"Though all the four are referred to as Silences, the first three are binding because there is some admixing of nescience in them. They cannot liberate an individual."

**Rama:** "If that is so, is there no *samādhi* for one who observes the statue like silence?"

**Vasishta:** "No, he will have *samādhi*. But he has to control his mind by force. His *samādhi* does not have unity with Truth. When he comes out of *samādhi*, his mind will necessarily be subjected to modifications."

**Rama:** "Does that mean that a *jīvanmukta* observing the fourth type of Silence can never come out of *samādhi*?"

**Vasishta:** "A *jīvanmukta*'s mind is subdued. That is to say that it is annihilated along with its cause. Hence his coming out of *samādhi* is merely apparitional and is not real."

**Rama:** "Extending the sequence of silences that you are speaking about, one can think of a fifth one, the Silence of Mind. Why don't we have it?"

**Vasishta:** "Perfect Silence of Mind is possible only at the time of death or unconsciousness or deep sleep for a follower of the statue like Silence. None of these states can facilitate the practices of a spiritual seeker. But in the case of a *jīvanmukta*, the mind itself is annihilated. Hence there is no question of control of mind for him.

Thus Silence of Mind is not useful for anybody. Hence the elders did not introduce the fifth type. For true seekers of Knowledge like you, the Silence of Deep Sleep is of prime importance.

"The fifth, sixth and the seventh steps in the Knowledge based path we talked about earlier, come under Silence of Deep Sleep. Rama! Chant Aum with focused attention. As indicated in Mandukya Upanishad contemplate on the different parts of Aum, identify the parts with Virat, Hiranyagarbha etc. and merge each part in the subsequent one. Thus abide yourself in Supreme Consciousness.

**54. Remaining Questions on the Story of Hundred Rudras**

**Rama:** "Fair enough, Sir. Now I shall come back to my question on the story of the holy saint. You said that जीवट *Jīvaṭa* and others together became the hundred Rudras. Have they become true Rudras or just members of the retinue in Rudra's service?"

**Vasishta:** "There is no difference either in wealth or in enjoyments between the principal Rudra and members of his retinue. All of them share the same Rudrahood. I referred to Jivata and others as the hundred Rudras because of this reason."

**Rama:** "The principal Rudra is the boss. Others are in his service. How could all of them be considered equal? Further the hundredth Rudra was the principal one. The remaining ones then are only ninety nine. How could you call them the 'hundred Rudras'?"

**Vasishta:** "Even that hundredth Rudra was one of the retinue in the service of the main Rudra of that world. Hence I grouped them together and named them the hundred Rudras."

**Rama:** "That is the reason for my question. All the hundred are of equal status. But in your story, the hundredth Rudra, the Swan, was able to give consciousness to the minds of the others. Is it possible for one to bestow consciousness to the minds of others in this world? If it is possible to do so, any one of them could have done that to the others. Why is it that only

the hundredth Rudra could do it in your story?"

**Vasishta:** "Ignorant ones will not have that capacity. Only Jivanmuktas can do it. Jivanmuktas are omniscient and have the capacity to realize their will. Hence the hundredth Rudra who is a Jivanmukta could do it.

**Rama:** "If Rudra was truly a *jīvanmukta*, what is the necessity for him to wander around a graveyard as a beggar?"

**Vasishta:** "There is nothing peculiar to Rudra here. It is the same even with Vishnu and Shiva. They are not constrained by scriptural stipulations in their acts. There is no restriction that they should perform only auspicious works approved in scriptures. They are also not restricted to do only such jobs that yield comfort. There is nothing but happiness in the world from their viewpoint. Hence they get happiness in whatever they do. They do not have any preferences or residual impressions. They take up jobs as they arise."

**Rama:** "If that is so, why should Rudra live in a graveyard whereas Vishnu lives in the Milky Way?"

**Vasishta:** "It is so because of the primary thought (*prathama sankalpa*) of Hiranyagarbha. They do not have likes or dislikes. Ordinary folk perceive differences in the world. The strong have a tendency to devour the weak. Therefore, they need scriptural restraints. They would suffer more if there were no regulations."

**55. Sānkhya and Yoga**

**Rama:** "How does one reach the state to be able to perceive happiness everywhere?"

**Vasishta:** "A while ago you raised a question on the fifth type of Silence. I said that it would happen only at the time of death. An ignorant man will not experience it even at the time of death because he will still have mental impressions. The fifth Silence is possible only for a man who gets liberated without a body (*videhamukta*). It is necessary that one should be a Jivanmukta before he can achieve the fifth state of Silence. There are two ways for liberation while still living (*jīvanmukti*). One is through Saankhya and the other is by Yoga.

**सम्यग्ज्ञानावबोधेन नित्यमेकसमाधिना ।**
**संख्ययैवावबुद्धा ये ते स्मृताः सांख्ययोगिनः ।।**

*samyagjñānāvabodhena nityamekasamādhinā |*
*saṃkhyayaivāvabuddhā ye te smṛtāḥ sāṃkhyayoginaḥ ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 69, Sloka 18

"Unceasing one-pointed Deep Meditation (*samādhi*) obtained through the Knowledge Path is called '*sānkhya*'. Whoever attains Self-Knowledge by this means is a *sānkhya yogi*.

**प्राणाद्यनिलसंशान्तौ युक्त्या ये पदमागताः ।**
**अनामयमनाद्यन्तं ते स्मृता योगयोगिनः ।।**

*prāṇādyanilasaṃśāntau yuktyā ye padamāgatāḥ |*

*anāmayamanādyantaṃ te smṛtā yogayoginaḥ* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 69, Sloka 19

"Whoever achieves everlasting Self-Knowledge through the control of life-force (*prāna, apāna* etc.) following the Yoga Path is called a *Yoga Yogi*.

"What is important is what has been achieved, not the method adopted to achieve it. Some will arrive at the essence of Truth following the *sānkhya* Path and some by Yoga Path.

**एकं सांख्यं च योगं च यः पश्यति स पश्यति ।**
**यत्सांख्यैः प्राप्यते स्थानं परं योगैस्तदेव हि ।।**

*ekaṃ sāṃkhyaṃ ca yogaṃ ca yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati* |
*yatsāṃkhyaiḥ prāpyate sthānaṃ paraṃ yogaistadeva hi* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 69, Sloka 21

"Whoever understands that *sānkhya* and Yoga are the same is truly wise because the Supreme State obtained through *sānkhya* is the same as the one gained from the Yoga Path.

[**Note:** What is being discussed here is similar to what was discussed in Chapter III of Bhagavad-Gita. Lord Krishna said,

**लोकेऽस्मिन् द्विविधा निष्ठा पुरा प्रोक्ता मयानघ ।**
**ज्ञानयोगेन साङ्ख्यानां कर्मयोगेन योगिनाम् ॥३॥**

*loke'smin dvividhā niṣṭhā purā proktā mayānagha* |
*jñānayogena sāṅkhyānāṃ karmayogena yoginām* ||

Bhagavad-Gita. III – 3

"Oh Blemishless One! I talked earlier of two types of firm adherence in this world. The first one is Knowledge Path to be followed by *sānkhyas* and the second one is action Path to be adopted by Yogis."

Sri Krishna also says,

**यं संन्यासमिति प्राहुर्योगं तं विद्धि पाण्डव ।**
**न ह्यसंन्यस्तसङ्कल्पो योगी भवति कश्चन ॥**

*yaṃ saṃnyāsamiti prāhuryogaṃ taṃ viddhi pāṇḍava* |
*na hyasaṃnyastasaṅkalpo yogī bhavati kaścana* ||

Bhagavad-Gita. VI – 2

"Oh Son of Pandu! Know that what is called renunciation in the Path of Action. If one is unable to give up 'thoughts', he can never be a Yogi."

One may deduce from the above teaching that one can use a mix of both *Saankhya* and Yoga because either of them will lead to liberation. This concept is known as Yoga-*Saankhya* composite approach or Knowledge-Action composite approach. Shri Sankara

established unequivocally in his commentary on Bhagavad-Gita that mixing up of the approaches was not possible because the paths were immiscibly diverse and one might adopt the different paths in tandem but not together. Shri ABS, commentator of Yogavaasishta too emphasized the same point. A reader desirous to have a detailed look at the pros and cons of the argument may consult Sankara's commentary on Gita.]

**56. What is Liberation in Brief**

**Vasishta:** "Rama! Whoever achieves dissolution of the mind either by way of *sānkhya* or Yoga will be free of the cycle of births and deaths engendered by the mind. He is not concerned with bondage or liberation. Liberation distilled from all scriptures can be briefly expressed in the following words:

**एकतत्त्वघनाभ्यासः प्राणानां विलयस्तथा ।**
**मनोविनिग्रहश्चेति मोक्षशब्दार्थसंग्रहः ।।**

*ekatattvaghanābhyāsaḥ prāṇānāṃ vilayastathā* |
*manovinigrahaśceti mokṣaśabdārthasaṃgrahaḥ* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 69, Sloka 27

1. Focused Contemplation on Non-dual Truth.
2. Dissolution of life-force.
3. Control of mind. Thus in short is the meaning of the word salvation.

**Rama:** "If dissolution of life-force is salvation, every one should get liberated after death."

**Vasishta:** "You have not followed properly what I have said. I did not imply that they are three separate approaches. There are three steps. From a Focused Contemplation on Non-dual Truth, the movement of life-force stops and it dissolves in mind. After that, the mind dissolves. Thus the first two steps facilitate liberation which is obtained at the end of the third step.

"You should know what is meant by dissolution of life-force. Mere desertion of the physical body is not the end of life-force. Life-force does not leave the body alone. It takes away with it the *tanmatras* of the five fundamental elements (*pancha bhūtās*). It creates a temporary body useful for actions in the space outside. The past impressions, desires and actions help the life-force in this process. This fact is explained in the Vedic statement:

**तद्यथा पेशस्कारी पेशसो मात्रामपादायान्यन्नवतरं कल्याणतरꣳ**
**रूपं तनुत एवमेवायमात्मेदꣳ शरीरं निहत्याविद्यां**
**गमयित्वाऽन्यन्नवतरं कल्याणतरꣳ रूपं कुरुते**

*tadyathā peśaskārī peśaso mātrāmapādāyānyannavataraṃ kalyāṇatara ꣳ*
*rūpaṃ tanuta evamevāyamātmeda ꣳ śarīraṃ nihatyāvidyāṃ*
*gamayitvā'nyannavataraṃ kalyāṇatara ꣳ rūpaṃ kurute*

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad IV – iv - 4

"The Self makes the earlier body disappear and carves out a new beautiful body, like a

goldsmith crafts new ornaments out of a piece of gold. It could obtain a form that belongs to the world of ancestors (*pitrus*), gods, Gandharwas, Prajapati or Brahma.

"The five *tanmatras* that leave the body along with the life-force retain a strong association with the impressions of the particular individual. So his life-force retains its identity separate from other life-forces. It goes in search of the life-forces and minds with similar impressions. It joins the world related to its form.

"What we can conclude from the above process is that neither the mind nor the life ends with the death of an individual. Both can end only when the impressions are annihilated by Self- Knowledge. So liberation does not automatically come with death.

"As already explained, if you pursue Focused Contemplation on Non-dual Truth, you can stop the modifications of life-force. In other words, you should obtain an unwavering oneness with Self through listening, reflection and contemplation. Just as the breeze stops when the fan stops rotating, mind ends with the termination of the movement of life-force. With that both knowledge and ignorance will cease. By knowledge I mean here the thought wave in the mind in the form of Brahman; and by ignoranceI mean the thought wave in the mind in the form of nescience. Abide yourself in that Pure Consciousness which remains at the culmination of both knowledge and nescience. That is liberation. 'Questions by Bhetala' substantiate well the fact that liberation is achieved easily by this technique. I shall now tell you the story of Bhetala's Questions.

[**Note:** There is a section titled 'Story of Soochika' which tells about the enigmatic Questions posed by Karkati (Soochika) in the third Chapter: Creation. The demon Karkati attained liberation. She decided to devour ignorant people in order to appease her hunger. She proceeded to the nearby kingdom of Kirata with that intention. She met the King and his Prime Minister and posed 72 questions to them regarding Self-Knowledge. Sage Vasishta narrated very captivatingly the story of Karkati in that chapter. The same story is being repeated here under the name of Bhetala. Because of the redundancy, the sage narrates the Bhetala story very loosely. We can infer it to be so from his statement:

**प्रीत्यं वा गन्धर्वं वा दैवं वा**
**प्राजापत्यं वा ब्राह्मं वा अन्येषां भूतानाम्**

*prītyaṃ vā gandharvaṃ vā daivaṃ vā*
*prājāpatyaṃ vā brāhmaṃ vā anyeṣāṃ bhūtānām*

"I casually mention this."

The sage takes up the story of Bhageeratha following that of Bhetala. Both these stories go to illustrate firstly that liberation is obtained by calming down the mind and secondly that no bondage from actions done will accrue to the liberated individual.]

**57. The Story of Bhetala's Questions**

**Vasishta:** "Once upon a time there lived Bhetala, a dreadful poltergeist in the Vindhyan range. Having attained Self-Knowledge, he used to be in deep meditation for most of the time. He used to satiate his hunger by devouring criminals and such bad characters from a neighboring kingdom. After a time, there were no more such sinners left in that kingdom. One night he, therefore, went to another kingdom. He searched for evil people whom he could eat. The King of the state was roaming around the kingdom in mufti on that night. Bhetala eyed

him. However, he could recognize that the person was the king of the land. He told the king that he (Bhetala) vowed to eat evil people and would eat away the king if the king failed to answer six of his (Bhetala's) questions. So saying, he quickly posed the questions.

"The king answered the questions seriatim with a smile. Bhetala's questions were very convoluted with unexpected twists and turns. The King's replies too were quite dexterous and spellbinding. Let us study the questions and answers.

**Bhetala:**

**कस्य सूर्यस्य रश्मीनां ब्रह्माण्डान्यणवः कृशाः ।**

*kasya sūryasya raśmīnāṃ brahmāṇḍānyaṇavaḥ kṛśāḥ* |

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 70, Sloka 13

"In which Sun's rays do the universes appear as a stream of specks of dust?

**King:** "Bhetala! Think of the universe that we are all living in to be a humongous fruit. Surrounding it concentrically one after another are the spheres of the five elements. Consider these spheres to be the rind of the fruit.

"There is a bough with thousands of those fruits. There is a tree with thousands of such boughs.

- There is a wood with thousands of such trees. There is a mountain with thousands of such woods.
- There is an island with thousands of such mountains.
- There is a huge globe (mahi peetha) with thousands of such islands. There is a huge star system with thousands of such globes.
- There is a heavenly egg with thousands of such star systems. There is a sea with thousands of such heavenly eggs.
- There is an ocean with thousands of such seas.
- Thousands of such oceans will be the waters in the stomach of a man.
- That man's name is Vishnu.
- Another great man wears a necklace of a hundred thousand of Vishnus.
- His name is Rudra.
- Millions of Rudras shine in the form of hair-follicles on the body of a very great man.
- His name is Aditya (= one who has been there right from the beginning; also sun). He is none other than the Supreme Consciousness.

"He illuminates all the universes of my gargantuan conception. He is the Brahman

with attributes. He also has an absolute form that is much more fundamental. The qualities of 'doership' and 'experiencership' which seem to exist in the Brahman with attributes do not at all affect the Absolute Brahman. The sun you are referring to is the Brahman with attributes."

**Bhetala:**

**कस्मिन्स्फुरन्ति पवने महागगनरेणवः ।।**

*kasminsphuranti pavane mahāgaganareṇavaḥ* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 70, Sloka 13

"In which winds do the spaces containing the universes float as particles?"

**King:** "You are introducing the concept of movement through your reference to wind. You are bringing forth the issue of beingness by referring to particles. Who has 'beingness'? Whose movements are they? There is beingness of time. There is beingness of space. There is beingness of movement. What is that great beingness which brings forth 'existence' to all of them? Can we call that to be the Supreme Self ? Does the relationship of one being the supporter and the other being the supported (*ādhārādheya* – one is substratum and the other is that which depends on the substratum) exist between them to justify such naming?

"You may argue that a flower and its fragrance are not separate. Even then, people generally refer to the fragrance in a flower as if the fragrance is separate from it and is sitting in the flower. On the same basis you may take the position that one may say that the beingness of time etc. exist in the beingness of the Supreme Self.

"It's okay to say so. It proves that individuation is a mere phantasm. The beingness of all effects that we see in the world dissolves gradually in the beingness of the series of causes like all the leaves of a banana plant merge inside each other to form its stem. If you pare down the layers, what remains finally is the Supreme Self like the pith of a banana plant. As He is hidden inside all the layers, we may consider Him to be subatomic. At the same time, He pervades all the layers. Hence we may also refer to Him as a mountain.

"All your questions are based on such imaginations. In the third question you asked me about the Pure substance that is ever present though one may be shifting through thousands of dreams. In the next question, you queried about what permeates the innards of all substances in the world, if one peels away the layers one after another like peeling away the layers of a banana stem. Your fifth question is about the atom in which the colossal universes and spaces would be no more than a sub-particle.

**कस्याणोः परमाणवः** *kasyāṇoḥ paramāṇavaḥ*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 70, Sloka 16

"Your sixth question concerns the subatomic particle which becomes a mountain and acts as a stone slate on which the picture of the three worlds is drawn. I gave one answer to all your conceptual questions. You look to be still a child. Reflect carefully on my answers and abide in peace."

"Listening to the replies of the King, Bhetala forgot about his hunger and went into deep meditation.

"Rama! Cultivate a calm mind. Get into deep meditation on Supreme Self. Take things as they come. If you lead your life thus, there won't be a thing that you cannot accomplish!

I will now tell you the story of Bhageerath and how he brought the Ganges River from the heavens to fortify my point.

**58. The story of Bhageerath**

**Vasishta**: "Rama! Bhageerath belonged to your lineage. Thanks to him, the river Ganges originated on earth. This, of course, is a well known fact. But many people do not know the secret of Bhageerath's strength. I shall now disclose that to you.

"Bhageerath was also a very pious man like you. He was courageous and compassionate. He was also an able administrator. He could understand that the world was no more than a phantasm though not at a young age like you, but by about his middle age. He was very detached and went on a pilgrimage. As a result he was more focused on understanding the Truth. One day his thoughts ran thus:

'A lot of people, who are considered to be noble, keep on performing auspicious rituals sanctioned by the scriptures. They enjoy the good effects of their deeds. It is going on like that day and night without their getting anything permanent.

How long should this madness continue? But the world does not take that to be madness. What else is it other than madness to run after like that in cycles? How can they come out of this folly?'

"At the time when his thoughts were running thus, he met a Guru by name Trital. Bhageerath served him for a long time and one day posed his apprehensive thoughts to him. The Guru was very considerate towards Bhageerath. He responded thus:

**Trital:** 'Bhageerath! There are a few steps available to cross the folly.

- First of all, you should practice Fourfold Aids of Seeking (*sādhana catusthaya* – a detailed description of the practices is given in the second Chapter: Behavior of a Seeker).
- You should cultivate *shravana, manana* and *nididhāysa* (These issues too were discussed in the second Chapter).
- Attain deep meditation.
- Acquire Knowledge on the oneness of the individual and the Supreme Self.

'If you observe the above four steps, the knots in your heart* will break and the effects of past actions will be annihilated. With the breaking of knots in the heart all your doubts will get clarified. You will then know that the Supreme Self is Pure Consciousness, pervades everything and has no variations like the rising and setting of the sun.'

[* **Note:** Knots in the heart (*hridaya granthi*): refers to the doubts in the heart of a seeker and also to the illusorily assumed linkage between the self and the body, self and organs and self and praana etc.]

**Bhageerath:** ‘Revered Teacher! I could easily understand that the attributeless Supreme Brahman is the substratum for everything in the world. But I am not able to get rid of some aspects of ignorance in me. Elders speak of three factors in ignorance. They are: ‘Negating’ (*asatya āpādaka*); ‘Blocking’ (*abhaāna āpādaka*) and ‘Misdirecting’ (*vikśepa*).’ The first factor implies that Brahman does not exist. I do not now entertain that.

The second factor means that even after it is known that Supreme Self exists, it gets blocked, some being experientially understood. I have not been able to get rid of this yet.

The third factor of ignorance interrupts continuous experience of Brahman (Supreme Self) by diverting the mind towards extraneous objects though one may get a feel of experiencing the Self after making considerable effort. I could not get rid of this too. I am unable to understand why I fail to surmount them in spite of the fact that I have the blessings of my teacher, I follow proper procedure and I am intent on Self-Knowledge. Please let me know the technique to free myself from these two hindrances.’

**Trital:** ‘Oh King! You are a very competent ruler. You have still an immense affinity towards governance. Hence, your mind keeps running towards governance. The main reason for it is your ego of being the ruler. Unless you are free of that you cannot achieve what you want.

**असक्तिरनभिष्वङ्गः पुत्रदारगृहादिषु ।**
**नित्यं च समचित्तत्वमिष्टानिष्टोपपत्तिषु ।।**
**आत्मनोऽनन्ययोगेन तद्भावनमनारतम् ।**
**विविक्तदेशसेवित्वमरतिर्जनसंसदि ।।**
**अध्यात्मज्ञाननित्यत्वं तत्त्वज्ञानार्थदर्शनम् ।**
**एतज्ज्ञानमिति प्रोक्तमज्ञानं तदतोऽन्यथा ।।**

*asaktiranabhiṣvaṅgaḥ putradāragṛhādiṣu |*
*nityaṃ ca samacittatvamiṣṭāniṣṭopapattiṣu || 28*
*ātmano'nanyayogena tadbhāvanamanāratam |*
*viviktadeśasevitvamaratirjanasaṃsadi || 29*
*adhyātmajñānanityatvaṃ tattvajñānārthadarśanam |*
*etajjñānamiti proktamajñānaṃ tadato'nyathā ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 74, Sloka 28, 29, 30

(* These three verses appear at XIII – 9, 10 & 11, Bhagavad-Gita with a minor difference. The first part of the middle verse reads as ‘*mayi ca ananya yogena bhaktiravyabhicariṇi* in the Gita’).

1. Acquire good qualities like being non-egositic. Develop non- attachment and non-identification towards wife, children, property etc. Do not feel depressed taking on the difficulties of your family members.
2. Be even-minded whether what happens is to your liking or not.
3. Abide in the Supreme Self firmly determined that there is no other goal than Brahman.
4. Develop a taste to live in sequestered places and do not clamor for company of people.
5. Stay ever in the contemplation of matters related to Self-Knowledge.
6. You will obtain Self-Knowledge as soon as your qualities like detachment etc. ripen. The advantage of gaining Self-Knowledge is liberation. Keep constantly thinking of liberation.

‘The good qualities that I told you thus far constitute true Knowledge. Things that are

contrary to them fall under ignorance. Eschew the ego from being the king that you continue to entertain.'

**Bhageerath:** 'How am I to hack the tree of ego that has grown deep roots like the trees on a mountain?'

**Trital:** 'Please listen.

1. Get rid of desire for luxury with determination.
2. Abandon the thoughts that you would not be respected or that your enemies will make fun of you if you leave your riches.
3. A skilled worker will resist if asked to eke out a living by begging. Self- respect and a sense of shame come in his way. That is the reason one does not desert his home. It means he is a prisoner in the cage of self-respect and prestige. Unless the cage is broken, the ego will not disappear. Hence, break the cage.
4. To start with, throw away the royal insignia.
5. Give away your kingdom to your opponents.
6. Live as a beggar at the doors of your enemies.
7. Finally leave me, your Guru, too.'

**Bhageerath:** 'How can that be, My Revered Teacher?

**यवदायुस्त्रयो वन्द्या वेदान्तो गुरुइश्वरह्**
*yavadāyustrayo vandyā vedānto guruiśvarah*

A verse from the commentary of Shri ABS.

'Sacred scriptures stipulate that Vedanta, Guru and Ishwar should be served as long as one is alive. How can I abandon you, my noble teacher?'

**Trital:** 'It's not that you will leave me because you have been unable to serve me. You leave me because you do not have anything to do with me. It is not wrong to do so. If you follow the series of steps taught by me, your ego will vanish and nescience will come to an end.'

"After listening carefully to the sermon of Trital, Bhageerath left for his kingdom. No sooner he reached his kingdom, he embarked upon various sacrificial rites. He gave alms left, right and center without hesitation unlike earlier times when he used to be cautious not to give alms to undeserving people. The general public were surprised at his actions. His ministers could not utter a word. He gave away everything and was left only with the clothes on his body. At the end, he became a beggar in his own kingdom.

**59. To Live Life as It Happens**

**Vasishta**:"The citizens of his country were very sad. His ministers cajoled him. But the king continued life as a beggar. On the top of it, one fine morning, he went straight to his enemy king and requested him to take over his kingdom. The enemy king made big fun of Bhageerath and finally agreed to take over his kingdom. With this, renunciation of the three desirables of Bhageerath reached a high point. (The three desirables are wife, sons and wealth). Bhageerath left his palace, went away to some far off god-forsaken villages where he was not recognized and wandered around as an Avadhhoot (a renouncer of the highest order). Several years went by thus.

"Unaware, one day he happened to enter his own kingdom during his purposeless and continuous wandering without staying more than one night at any given place. Though he recognized his ex-kingdom, there was no reaction in his mind. He moved around as a beggar.

After a few days some of his old ministers identified him. They persuaded him to stay with them. The enemy king also happened to hear about Bhageerath. The enemy king was in a dilemma about what to do. Bhageerath went to the king's palace as a beggar. The enemy king understood the greatness of Bhageerath and besought him to take back his kingdom.

"Bhageerath did not swerve from his resolve. He continued to live in that town as a beggar for a few more days and left the place without anybody's knowledge. He met his old Guru, Trital in his wanderings. Both of them felt very happy meeting each other. Because both of them not only renounced comforts but also considered their own bodies as worthless, they did not indulge themselves in worldly talks. They moved together for some days discussing Brahman. Because both of them had to live as per their current suffrage (*prārabdha*) having no desires of their own, one day they went away on their separate ways.

"Bhageerath reached a kingdom in his begging rounds. The ministers in the kingdom were debating at that time for a suitable heir for the throne of that kingdom. Having recognized Bhageerath, they cleverly offered their kingdom as alms to him. They explained their reason and implored him to accept the kingdom.

"Bhageerath conceded to their request as he was living by the principle of accepting things as they come without any personal preference. Within a few days, the kingdom returned to its past glory.

"The ways of the divinity are strange indeed! An enemy king of Bhageerath died suddenly. The ministers from that kingdom pleaded with Bhageerath to take over their kingdom too. Bhageerath acceded to their request because of his principle of taking things as they happen. Bhageerath became an emperor once again. His administrative acumen and governance reached new heights as he was a mature and composed individual who transcended emotional highs or lows.

"In the meantime, Garutman gave an audition to some of his devotees. During the audition, he said to them as follows:

'The ancestors of your King Bhageerath are getting roasted to ashes in the nether worlds. His ancestral parents will be redeemed if waters from Ganges are sprinkled on the ash heaps after bringing down the divine river from Heaven to earth and from earth to the nether lands. It is his duty to do so. If he makes an effort he can do it. If he does so, the people living on the earth too will be purified. It is not proper for a capable ruler not to help his citizenry.'

"Slowly the word reached Bhageerath. He immediately recognized that it was his bounden duty. As he was a perfectly detached individual, he handed over the reins of the kingdom to his ministers without any hesitation and proceeded to perform austerities and deep meditation. He meditated on Brahma, Ishwar and the Sage Jahnu and with their blessings brought the Ganges from Heaven to earth and from there to nether world.

"Rama, notice how, great individuals who reached the pinnacle of desirelessness and are completely detached, can help the people at large! You also should learn to live with

whatever comes your way. If you achieve that state, you will be stable like Sikhidhwaj."

**60. The Story of Chūdāla and Sikhidhwaj**

**Rama:** "Respected Teacher! Who is Sikhidhwaj and how did he attain stability?"

**Vasishta:** "There lived once a pious couple by the names of **चूडाल** Chūdāla and **शिखिध्वज** Sikhidhvaja. They belong to your lineage. Right now it is Sweta Varaha Kalpa (period). They were born in one of the Dwapar Yugas of the previous period. Presently it is the 28th chaturyugi (= a set of four yugas equivalent to 4.32 million earth years ) within the current kalpa. Within the present *chaturyugi, treta yuga* is going on now. In the coming *Dwapar yuga* also they will be born with the same names."

**Rama:** "What is the reason for history to repeat itself?"

**Vasishta:** "Rama! Brahma and others are the designers of the world. Every intention of theirs is realized. But they have certain inviolable characteristics. These characteristics are responsible for the recurrence of history.

"Take a mango tree. It possesses many branches. We cannot say yes or no if you ask whether all of its branches are alike. There are a hundred fruits in a branch. Are all the fruits alike? They apparently look similar. But on a detailed examination you will find differences. The fruits fall off, though the branch stays stable. If you hack down that branch, another branch will sprout up. But one cannot consider the previous branch to be reborn. What is the reason for this? The Laws of nature embedded within its seed are the reasons.

"Or look at the ripples in the river. Do the ripples resemble one another? Obviously not. Wind is the cause for the similarity or difference. Likewise, the reappearance of events in creation is caused by the natural traits within the thought of Hiranyagarbha. But let me come back to the story.

"Sikhadhwaj was born in the Kuru dynasty of rulers in Dwapar yuga of fourth chaturyugi within the eighth manvantara of an earlier kalpa. He was a virtuous and competent king and had Ujjaini as his capital city. As he took over the reins of the kingdom at a very early age, his marriage was delayed. He did not contemplate marriage for a considerable time. But with age, his thoughts were fixated on women. His ministers noticed his state and encouraged him to marry 'Chūdāla', the daughter of the ruler of Surāśtra. As it was a late marriage, he was totally obsessed with his wife. Their mutual compatibility too was remarkable. They were both very intelligent and highly educated. Their principal occupation was to educate one another in their respective fields of knowledge.

"Chūdāla learnt everything about governance from her husband Sikhidhwaj. He learnt from her fine arts of music and dancing. Running the administration also turned out to be a romantic deed for them. They lived in their own happy world. Several years went by thus. But who could stop the passage of time? Like water leaking out of a cracked pot, their youthful vigor too began to evaporate.

**भिन्नकुम्भादिवाम्भसि** *bhinnakumbhādivāmbhasi*

"Both being intelligent and sensible, their attention got diverted with increasing age towards understanding the truth of the world. Effortlessly they embarked on a study of spiritual works. They could infer that the world is very transient and impermanent as they delved deep into the scriptures. Now their discussion turned to spiritual matters whenever they were together. Without their own awareness, both of them got focused on spirituality.

**तच्चिन्तनं तच्चवणमन्योन्यं तत् प्रबोधनम्**
**एतदेकपरत्वम् च ब्रह्माभ्यासम् विदुर्बुदः**

*taccintanaṃ taccravaṇamanyonyaṃ tat prabodhanam*
*etadekaparatvam ca brahmābhyāsam vidurbudaḥ*

A popular verse from Laghu Vaakya vritti (Sloka 17) of Shri Sankara quoted by the Commentator.

"Constant thinking about It (Brahman), always listening about It, discussing only It with one another and being forever fired with It is called by elders as Practicing Brahman. The couple was gripped by such a state.

**61. Self-Realization of Chūdāla**

"The workload of governance increased for the king after a time. As a result, Chūdāla had more free time on her hand. She delighted in inviting well versed Pundits and discussed with them unceasingly matters related to Self-Knowledge. Stimulated by the discourses of the Pundits, she began self-inquiry within herself continuously during the day and also in the nights. The first issue she inquired into was what inert things were and what conscious things were. She found out that body, senses, mind, intellect and I-consciousness were inert and only the individual (*jīva*) inside was conscious. She then inquired into the reason why senses etc. had an apparent consciousness. She concluded that 'superimposition' was the cause.

"Chūdāla proceeded to inquire into superimposition. She could understand the essentials of basic philosophy to some extent from her investigation. She obtained a bit of clarity on Self-Knowledge from her analysis. Consequently she was more peaceful. Gradually her understanding of Self-Knowledge improved. She grasped the essence of Self-Knowledge soon helped by her unswerving and firm practice of Self-inquiry. She transcended the pairs of opposites. Clarity dawned and she had no more doubts. She attained eternal bliss.

Chūdāla realized from her own experience the truth of the adage that illusion would vanish to a knower of Self as easily as an ordinary person would get deluded. All the miseries (*tāpatraya*) in her heart gave way to perfect peace. A new brilliance emanated from her and she bloomed like a fresh blossom. Noticing her brightness one day her husband said playfully:

'Chūdāla, I see a new inexplicable beauty in you. It looks as though your youth has returned to you. You seem to have consumed immortal nectar from some heaven. I also observed another change in you. You get neither aroused nor depressed unlike earlier times. I

feel that you have no enthusiasm for anything. People without anything to look for usually fall into depression. In contrast, you appear quite bubbly. As far as I know, you did not acquire any new possessions. There has been no change in our empire too. May I know the reason for the blooming bouncing brightness in you?'

"Chūdāla replied to the enquiry of her husband first through hints and later by direct words. She described to him about her search for Self-knowledge."

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki scripted ten beautiful verses at this point, each verse ending in the chorus '*tenāsmi sreematee sthitā*' or '*tenāham sreematee sthitā*' (meaning 'And hence I am so vivacious and radiant'). The gist of the verses is presented below.]

**Chūdāla:** 'My Master! I did not leave anything; but I renounced everything. That is the secret of my sparkling splendor.

'There is Truth as well as untruth in this world. I captured something beyond both. That is the secret of my sparkling splendor.

'All things in the world are finite and limited at the time of creation. Same things merge with the infinite divine Truth at the time of Dissolution. I see the world both from the creation viewpoint and also the Dissolution viewpoint. That is the secret of my sparkling splendor.

'I am content as if I have enjoyed every luxury without experiencing any. I do not feel happy enjoying them. I don't have the angst for not experiencing them. That is the secret of my sparkling splendor.

'I used to frolic in regal grandeur earlier. I was then stuck within the limits of royal premises. But now my heart is as vastly expansive as the sky. I am alone there without anyone else. I play with myself. That is the secret of my sparkling splendor.

'I used to delight in procuring more and more novel things for the house. Now I live within myself even without any of those things. I am not particularly happy because they are brought home. Nor am I sad because I miss them. That is the secret of my sparkling splendor.

'Formerly I was the queen of one country. I was bound by the kingdom. Now I am without any bounds. I cherish within myself that I am the lady of the three worlds. That is the reason for my sparkling splendor.

'I realize that -- in one view, I am everything that is perceivable; from another view, I am none of it; in one view I am Truth; from another view I am not true. That is the reason for my sparkling splendor.

'I do not crave comfort. Nor do I invite sorrow. I don't reject anything. I am happy with things as they happen. That is the reason for my sparkling splendor.

'I had fun in the past playing with my attendants. Scriptural anecdotes that emancipate affection and revulsion are now my retinue. I amuse myself with them. That is the reason for my sparkling splendor.'

पश्यामि यन्नयनरश्मिभिरिन्द्रियैर्वा
चित्तेन चेह हि तदङ्ग नकिंचिदेव ।
पश्यामि तद्विरहितं तु नकिंचिदन्तः
पश्यामि सम्यगिति नाथ चिरोदयास्मि ।।

*paśyāmi yannayanaraśmibhirindriyairvā*
*cittena ceha hi tadaṅga nakiṃcideva |*
*paśyāmi tadvirahitaṃ tu nakiṃcidantaḥ*
*paśyāmi samyagiti nātha cirodayāsmi ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 79, Sloka 31

'My Lord, I could realize that whatever I perceive with my eyes or other organs or the mind does not have existence. I cognize directly a world that is beyond the sensory organs and mind but is not really a world. Hence I am so vivacious and radiant.'

"Sikhidwaj, though had had some spiritual awareness from his earlier studies, had forgotten it, having immersed himself with the administration of his kingdom. Consequently, he made light of Chūdāla's response. He told her:

'चूडाल Chūdāla! Looks like something is wrong with you! You are talking incoherently.'

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki composed six verses with the refrain '*sah katham kila sobhate*' (meaning how such a one can have radiance? Briefly his reaction was as follows.]

**Sikhidwaj:** 'Cleverly weaving together mutually contradictory sentences do not speak of wisdom. When the world is so concretely visible, you want to desert it and hang on to some void. What kind of happiness is there for someone clinging to a void? What good is it?

'You say that you are happy even without enjoying comforts. It sounds like the person who said that he slept comfortably on the hard floor after he broke all the furniture at home enraged by his wife.

'You say that you are your body. In the same breath you deny it. What nonsense! To top it all, you say that you see something without your senses and mind. How is it possible?

Chūdāla! Please listen to me. Do not fall into that crap. Playfully spend life like me with regal matters and royal comforts.'

"Sikhidwaj ridiculed her thus and excused himself to attend to his mid-day ablutions. Chūdāla was a bit nonplussed. She felt bad that her husband could not understand her. Scriptures hold that it is highly regrettable if a man learns about Self-Knowledge in his life but fails to achieve it. She felt sorry for her husband.

"Days rolled by. The affectionate couple that never had had any difference of opinion

in the past was now leading their life in separate ways.

## 62. Yogic Accomplishments of Chūdāla

**Vasishta**: "Chūdāla spent most of her time reflecting on Self-Knowledge. But old habits die hard! Though she gave up all the comforts of royalty, she desired to travel in the sky like gods. Sikhidwaj had to go out of the country on battle expeditions for a couple of years at that time. Chūdāla used this opportunity for a study and practice of Khecharee yoga. She sat alone locked in lotus pose and brought her life-breath to the center of brows."

At this point Rama interrupted the stream of Sage Vasishta's narration with a philosophical question.

**Rama:** "Revered Teacher, the world appears to be engendered by some type of action. It is all the same whether we say it is an action or a movement. How does this 'movement' come into being? We observe that one who does not possess Self-Knowledge is propelled by desire to act in the world. Though one has acquired Self-Knowledge, he too, like Chūdāla, keeps working on something or other with pleasure. The sum and substance of it all is that every one works. Please explain wherefrom does the movement or action arise?"

**Vasishta:** "Rama! There are two things as a matter of fact – one is action and the other is the result of action or effect. In order to get a result, you have to have certain enabling causes and processes. There are no other causes or processes behind an action except for these. Therefore, a question does not arise about what was prior to the action apart from what existed prior to the effect of the action. The effect of an action comes in three flavors. They are:

1. Acceptable Effects: These effects are welcome. They facilitate the happiness of the individual either directly or indirectly.
2. Rejectable Effects: These should be avoided. These have a reverse quality to those in (1) above.
3. Neutral Effects: These are in between the above two. One could be indifferent towards them.

"If you examine closely, none of the three effects are helpful to attain Self-Knowledge. Or at the most, we may say that the third type may be of some use. In contrast, all three exist in the case of an ignorant person. A question may come up on what would the flavor of an effect depend on – does it depend on the effect itself or the experiencer of the effect. We have to admit that it depends on the experiencer. It is so because the same effect would be neutral to a Self-knowing man (*jnāni*), desirable to an ignorant man and avoidable to a renouncer.

"Unaffectedness exists behind the effect of actions of a *jnāni*. Hence the action does not bear any relation to him. No action has arisen from his perspective. From the standpoint of the ignorant people, the effects of actions depend on four factors – place, time, action and substance. For example, austerity, meditation, yoga etc. carried out in pious places like Srisaila yield quick results. Austerities done with gemstones, mantras, medicinal herbs yield a variety of results. All of this is quite complex. Because of their very nature, such actions are

harmful to you. You do not have to be concerned with those actions because your objective is Self-Knowledge. Hence, we shall now discuss the yoga practices followed by Chūdāla"

Sage Vasishta detailed the methods embraced by Chūdāla from the 37th verse in the 80th Sarga to the end of 82nd Sarga. He dealt with Root Chakra, Kundalini, 72,000 nerves, movement of life-force and so on in the 80th Sarga.

The 81st Sarga dealt with Rama's query regarding deficiencies and diseases in the human body. Sage Vasishta said that lack of knowledge about Truth and lack of control of the senses were the principal reasons. In that context he described the techniques of travel along celestial paths, meeting men of attainment and entering other's bodies. He added that the human body was a combination of fire and moon factors – the moon factor was the cool part and the fire factor which emerged from the moon factor was the hot part. (Some later commentators interpret the fire factor to be energy and the moon factor to be matter).

The 82nd Sarga covered in brief yogic attainment of '*aNima*' (miniaturizing the body to the size of an atom) and '*garima*' (expanding the body to the size of a mountain). Finally he declared:

**ज्ञात्वा सदाभ्युदितमुज्झितदोषमीशो**
**यद्यद्यथा समभिवाञ्छति चित्प्रकाशः ।**
**प्राप्नोति तत्तदचिरेण तथैव राम**
**सम्यक्पदं विदुरनावरणत्वमेव ।।**

*jñātvā sadābhyuditamujjhitadoṣamīśo*
*yadyadyathā samabhivāñchati citprakāśaḥ* |
*prāpnoti tattadacireṇa tathaiva rāma*
*samyakpadaṃ viduranāvaraṇatvameva* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 82, Sloka 34

"An individual adept at yogic techniques would realize the self-luminous and blemishless Self. He would be able to get immediately whatever he wishes for. But elders know that the supreme attainment is to get rid of the veiling power of nescience."

Ending his elaboration on yogic methods thus, Sage Vasishta resumed the story of Chūdāla in the 83rd Sarga.

**Vasishta:** "Chūdāla practiced rigorously and obtained many yogic powers. She was able to travel in the sky with those yogic powers. She could go deep into the oceans. She moved around on the earth. Do not conclude from this that she joined mendicants. She was by then in her middle age. Because of the past tendencies, her love for her husband did not diminish. She used to wear golden ornaments and roam around along with her husband. Whenever she had an opportunity, she used to fly along the celestial paths wearing several ornaments. Her ornaments glistened through clouds whenever she moved in space.

"In her travels, Chūdāla visited the cities of the rulers of the four quarters (directions). She had conversations with birds, ghosts, Vidhyadharas (celestial beings) and gods. She visited all the strange places in creation. In the midst of all these things, she used to educate her husband cleverly on Self-Knowledge. Though her husband made fun of her initially, he began appreciating her intelligence. He listened to her and understood the Truth. But like forgetful school children, he was unable to remember what he had learnt. Concerned with his

forgetfulness, she used to patiently repeat her teachings but she never resorted to using her yogic powers to educate him."

**63. Significance of Guru's Teaching**

**Rama:** " Master ! Sikhidwaj could not understand Truth even though Chūdāla, an accomplished yogi taught him. Can the teaching by an ordinary Guru be of any help?"

**Vasishta:** "Attainment of Self-Knowledge does not depend on the Guru. It depends on the competence of the disciple."

**Rama:** "Why is it said then that Self could not be known without the teaching of a Guru?"

**Vasishta:** "It is a bit complicated. I shall tell you a story to clarify this.

"A long time ago there was a penny-pinching business man by the name Kirat in the forest region of Vindhyan mountain range. He was a millionaire. Yet he was quite avaricious for money. One day when he was going by a forest path, he noticed something like a sea shell in the grass bushes. Sea shells would commonly occur on sea shores.
But it was a rarity in the Vindhyan forest. When he saw the shell, he felt that there could be more of them in the bushes. He thought that he could start a new business with the shells. So he broke his journey, dug out the area and searched for more shells. Sadly for him, he could not find even one more shell. Other passers-by made fun of his digging. However, with renewed determination, the miser explored the area for three continuous days. "On the third day of his digging, he found a wish-fulfilling gemstone shining like a bright full moon. Because of the gem stone he became extremely wealthy.

"Rama! It is the same thing with the teaching of a Guru. A disciple gains indirect knowledge about Brahman through the sound of the word. But as the student goes on exploring like Kirat, one fine day he will get direct experiential understanding of Brahman. The surprising thing here is you look for something but what you get is something different.

"If Kirat did not explore, he would not have found anything. Without the teaching by the Guru, the disciple cannot get the experiential understanding of the Self. Kirat did not search for the gemstone. The disciple goes on reflecting on the teaching of the Guru without any concern of experiencing Self. But he will achieve the gem of Self-Knowledge.

"Hence Self-Knowledge cannot be obtained without the teaching of a Guru. But at the same time, you cannot say it was the cause for Self-Knowledge."

**64. Renunciation by Sikhidwaj**

**Vasishta**: "In the case of Sikhhidwaj, Chūdāla, in the role of a Guru, showed him something like that shell. But the disciple did not go about looking for it. Chuudaala used to feel sad about that. But her effort was not a total waste. Her husband could at least intellectually understand. As a result he lost interest in royal pleasures. Detachment sprouted in him. He gave away more and more donations and became more righteous. He went on pilgrimages. Whatever may be his effort, his mind did not fade. He became very thin with this worry.

"While talking one day to his wife, he addressed her thus:

**Sikhidwaj:** 'Chūdāla! I enjoyed regal grandeur for quite a while. Looking deeply, I find that life in the forest seems to be much better than the palatial comforts. Forest dwellers do not have worrisome problems of finance, fears of invasions, control of the army and so on.

I want to go away to a forest and observe austerities. Please do not come in my way. After all, loyal wives do not go contrary to their husband's wishes!'

**Chuudaala:** 'Master! One should take actions as appropriate to one's age. Older people should opt for dwelling in a forest. You are not yet that old. Have patience. When we reach a ripe age, we shall go together to a forest for meditation.'

**Sikhidwaj:** 'I have already requested you not to object. You are still young and it is true that a rigorous forest life is hard for ladies. I am determined to go to the forest. You please stay here and rule the country on my behalf. Is it not the duty of the wife to take care of things when the husband travels out ? We will talk about it again. It's now time for my ablutions.'

**Vasishta**: "So saying, Sikhidwaj left in a huff. Later that night, the couple retired to bed. The wife was soon asleep. But the husband could not get a wink. He left the house after midnight when his wife, Chūdāla was in sound sleep. As per his plan, he walked towards the Mandara Mountain range. He reached the Mandara Mountain after twelve days of travel, moving during nights and sustaining himself on a diet of wild fruits. He built a small hut for himself. He located a place where he could obtain votary offerings. Without wasting a minute more, he set about on a routine of worship.

"He bathed at dawn and completed ablutions before daybreak. Then he took up chanting mantras till noon; then he bathed again, collected flowers for worship, consumed some edible fruits, chanted mantras again and retired to bed early. He spent many days with this routine like a mendicant.

"Chūdāla got up at about dawn in the palace. She found that her husband was missing. She couldn't locate him. She could decipher that he left the house. Initially she felt a bit sad. Then she reflected on the matter and made a proclamation saying that the king went to foreign lands on some personal errands and that he asked her to take care of the kingdom during his absence. She governed the country with skill and tact for eighteen years.

"Chūdāla kept a constant watch on her husband using her yogic powers. His meditation was going on okay in the forest. He had also grown old. His mind was purified to some extent. She decided that it was time to educate him on Self once again. She went by celestial route on a night to meet her husband. Though she was an adept yogi, she was a bit excited at the prospect of meeting her husband. She was a little surprised at the reaction of her own mind. She continued her journey keeping her mind under control. Finally she arrived at Shikhidwaj's hermitage. She assumed an invisible form. Shikhidwaj was preparing a garland of flowers when she saw him. He was very much reduced and thinned down. His hair was matted. His skin was tanned. He wore a burlap cloth. Chūdāla was very unhappy to see her husband's condition. Her thoughts went thus: 'How foolish can one become in the absence of discrimination about Self-Knowledge! He could have comfortably stayed in his kingdom and attained Self-Knowledge. Instead, he moved to the forest and is struggling so hard. He does not look to have achieved the goal yet. His face lacks that charisma. He is now mature to receive True Knowledge. But he will not listen to me as he does not have respect for my teaching. So I shall appear before him as a young holy saint. Considering this, Chūdāla

assumed the form of a holy bachelor saint using the strength of her yogic powers.

"Chūdāla in the garb of a holy bachelor saint pretended to casually roam around the hermitage. The holy saint's face was brilliant and charming. Sikhidwaj was stunned to notice the holy saint. He invited the saint and entreated him in a befitting manner as one would do to a guest. Their conversation proceeded as follows after the initial formalities were done with:

**65. The Story of Mr. Pot**

**Sikhidwaj:** 'Oh Godly Young man! Where have you come from ?'

**Holy Bachelor:** 'Royal Saint! My respects to you. I traveled quite a bit on the earth. But I haven't met a humble person like you. I could understand that you have been observing austerities with a calm mind in order to attain liberation. You sacrificed even royal luxuries for this. It is truly quite exceptional.'

**Sikhidwaj:** 'Holy Saint! Your clairvoyance is commendable. I am sanctified by meeting you. You look very handsome. I had a beautiful wife when I was a householder. The surprising thing is that you resemble her very much. I feel quite happy. You are a respected guest (*abhyāgathah*) who has unexpectedly arrived this mid-day. Our scriptures say that '*abhyāgathah svayam viśnuh* (an unexpected mid-day guest is equivalent to Lord Vishnu).' So please accept this garland of flowers which was prepared by me as an offering to God and clarify my doubts.'

**Holy Bachelor:** 'Do please pose your questions'

**Sikhidwaj:** 'Sir ! Who are you and who is your father? For what reason have you been so kind to drop by me ? What are you going to bestow on me?

**Holy Bachelor:** 'As you have been so polite in your query, I shall give you a detailed answer. You must have heard about the great Saint Narada. He was in meditation on the banks of the Heavenly Ganges River in the mountain ranges of Meru. When he opened his eyes after his meditation, a few godly damsels were bathing in the river. Because of the divine sport, his mind was aroused and he ejaculated.'

**Sikhidwaj:** 'Oh Brahmin ! Narada is omniscient. He is also a godly saint. How could his mind get excited?'

**Holy Bachelor:** 'Oh, Royal Saint! Individuals (*jīvas*) are the same anywhere. It hardly matters whether one is a man or a god. One has to be absolutely absorbed in contemplation of Self in order not to be influenced by the perceivables; if one comes out of such meditation and is exposed to the dualistic world, no one can predict how the mind will react. The difference, however, is that a fool's mind will adhere to the dualistic objects like vermilion sticking to a piece of cloth. A mind with Self-Knowledge may temporarily get a pinkish hue just as a clear crystal gets a rose tint when lying beside a rose flower. The impressions from an object will continue to persist in the mind of an ignorant man even after the object is gone. Impressions will not cling to a Knower of Truth (*jnāni*). After all, that's what differentiates bondage from liberation!'

**भावनातानवं मोक्षो बन्धो हि दृढभावना ।**

*bhāvanātānavaṃ mokṣo bandho hi dṛḍhabhāvanā |*

'Reduction in thoughts is liberation. An increase in thoughts is bondage.

'For ordinary people, happiness and sorrow depend on the movement of their nerves. Ejaculation may happen if some nerves get stimulated at the sight of exciting shapes like those of women. Residual impressions within the individual are the reason for such excitement. An ignorant person goes on analyzing whether such actions are permitted or not as per scriptures. A Jivanmukta with emaciated impressions would not come back to the worldly ways even if such things happen because of traces of some remnant impressions in him. I have learnt this from my own experience.

'Narada did not get affected by the incident. He calmly thought over the matter and felt that the semen from a godly saint should not go waste. He stored the semen in a crystal pot. He filled the pot with nutrient medicinal soup created with the strength of his intention using his knowledge of scriptures. A boy was born out of the pot after some period. Narada attended to all the needs of the boy, educated him in Vedas and took him along to the world of Brahma. He dedicated the boy to Brahma. Brahma looked at the boy and could recognize that he would turn out to be a very knowledgeable individual. He felt quite happy and blessed the boy. Brahma named him 'Kumbh' because he was born out of a pot (*kumbh* is the Sanskrit word for pot).

'Oh, Royal Saint, I am that Kumbh. With the kind permission of Brahma I have been living with him engaging myself in deep meditation on Brahman. I am not controlled by fate. Because of the residual impressions, I keep moving freely to different places. Though I am on the earth now, my feet do not touch the ground. My feet do not get soiled. You have already noticed me coming from up above the sky.

'That is all my life-story.'

**Sikhidwaj:** 'Oh, Saint! I am indeed fortunate that I could meet an inhabitant of the world of Brahma. It must be because of the good karma (effect of past actions) of mine. It is rightly said that association with noble people is superior to even acquiring new empires.'

**Holy Bachelor:** 'Now tell me your story. Why are you living in this forest land?'

**Sikhidwaj:** 'Sir, you are aware of everything. As you are asking, I shall describe my life very briefly.

'I was a monarch and Sikhidwaj is my name. I was caught up by the fear of rebirth. I deeply cogitated over it. I visited many hermitages. I could not find a reliable sure-fire technique to avoid rebirth. I did not know what to do. Nor could I sit doing nothing about it. I came away to the forest and have been tenaciously practicing various rites and meditation. I admit, though I have not gotten much benefit so far.'

**Holy Bachelor:** 'Royal Saint, I myself enquired from God Brahma whether Knowledge or action was superior. Brahma was very clear and certain. He declared that Knowledge was superior. He said that only through Knowledge one could get liberated. Following rituals (actions) is just about passing time, according to him. I countered him saying that learned Vedic Pundits followed rituals. He dispensed that away saying that it was the misfortune of

those who could not understand Knowledge. I said that rituals did yield their own results. He replied: 'Only persons bound by residual impressions believe in the effects of rituals (actions). Ghosts appear only to a child who heard about them.' I was quite surprised. I verified from my own life. I found that what he said was absolutely true. Brahma continued:

**सवासनं मनो ज्ञेयं ज्ञानं निर्वासनं मनः ।**
**ज्ञानेन ज्ञेयमभ्येत्य पुनर्जीवो न जायते ।।**

*savāsanaṃ mano jñeyaṃ jñānaṃ nirvāsanaṃ manaḥ* |
*jñānena jñeyamabhyetya punarjīvo na jāyate* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 87, Sloka 27

'Kumbh! There are two types of minds. A mind that continues to possess the impressions of past actions falls under the category of knowable objects in the world. A mind totally devoid of impressions is by itself Knowledge. The trick is to perceive knowables (objects) through Knowledge. There will be no rebirth if you do so.'

'Royal Saint, all the gods like Brahma and others hold that Knowledge is the undoubted path for liberation. How can you ignore their words and talk of various rites and rituals? How can you hang on to the staff (wooden arm-rest), water vessel (*kamandal*) and Cogon grass (*Darbha*, Botanical name: *Imperata cylindrica*) mat symbolical of ordinary meditators?

**कोऽहं कथमिदं जातं कथं शाम्यति चेति भोः ।**
**राजन्नावेक्षसे कस्मात्किमज्ञ इव तिष्ठसि ।।**
**कथं बन्धः कथं मोक्ष इति प्रश्नानुदाहरन् ।**
**पारावारविदां पादान्कस्माद्राजन्न सेवसे ।।**

*ko'haṃ kathamidaṃ jātaṃ kathaṃ śāmyati ceti bhoḥ* |
*rājannāvekṣase kasmātkimajña iva tiṣṭhasi* ||
*kathaṃ bandhaḥ kathaṃ mokṣa iti praśrānudāharan* |
*pārāvāravidāṃ pādānkasmādrājanna sevase* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 87, Sloka 30-31

'Why don't you take up Self-inquiry? Begin with questions like 'Who am I? How has this world come about and how does it dissolve?' Why do you wail in ignorance? Why don't you seek the guidance of Self knowing people asking them why one got into bondage and how one could get free? Why do you waste your time with externals like observing austerities etc.? What can you gain from them? Go and seek the advice of noble people with a balanced mind. Beseech them with obedience and pose your questions with humility. Then you will be able to attain freedom from rebirth.'

**Sikhidwaj:** 'Sir, you opened my eyes. I am not dim-witted any more. My sins are burnt to ashes. Coming here on your own, you have taught me valuable knowledge. You are my Guru. You are my father. You are my savior. I fall at your feet. Kindly you yourself impart to me the knowledge by which I can transcend the cycle of births and deaths.'

**Holy Bachelor:** 'Imparting knowledge is not so difficult. Difficulty lies in listening. What I teach will carry weight only if you have faith in my word. Otherwise it is just sound and fury. Do you have faith in me?'

**Sikhidwaj:** 'Respected Sir! I solemnly promise that I will take your word as equal to that ordained in Vedas.'

**Holy Bachelor:** 'No, no. Do not take it with the scare that you have for Vedic statements. Listen to me with love as you would listen to the advice of your father. First understand what I speak. Reflect over it and finally put that into practice. In order to make things simple, I shall begin with two small stories.

**66. The Story of A Gem Stone and A Glass Piece**

'There lived once a very competent king. He desired to procure a wish-fulfilling gemstone. He searched very hard for it. He couldn't believe himself when he discovered one soon. He doubted whether it was a true gemstone or not as he felt that it was available quite easily for him though he had no special talent. He also felt that it might disappear even if it was a genuine one, if an unfortunate person like him touched it. He lost himself in similar worthless thoughts and finally lost the gemstone. After a few days, he again began the search for the gemstone. He found a piece of glass. For some reason he was convinced that it was a gemstone. He felt that he could get whatever he wanted because he had the wish-fulfilling gemstone with him. Proud of owning it, he forsook his wealth, kingdom and everything. Losing all his possessions, he became a beggar.

'My Dear King, this was the first story. Now I shall tell you the second story.'

**67. The Story of The Mahout**

'Once upon a time, there lived an elephant in the forests of the Vindhyan mountain range. A mahout captured and trained it to do a few acrobatic feats. He was a merciless task master. He exercised the elephant cruelly, poking it hard with the elephant goad. The elephant could not stand the torture any more. One day it tried to break the chains tied to its legs. The mahout noticed it from a distance. He ran towards the elephant. But the elephant freed itself before he could reach. The mahout climbed a tall tree nearby and planned to jump on its head. He hoped the elephant would come under control with the impact of the fall.

Luckily for the elephant, the mahout missed his target and fell down, almost breaking his back. The elephant had one look at him and thought of crushing him under its foot. But it felt that there was no point in crushing a fallen man. It escaped deep into the forest leaving him there.

'The mahout got up after some time. He was relieved that he did not break any of his bones. He went in search of the elephant. After a few days of searching, he found it hiding behind some bushes. He dug out a pit around the bushes and laid a trap for the elephant. He waited for the elephant to fall into the pit. After a few days, the elephant did fall into the pit. He recaptured it, tied it with heavy iron chains and took control. The elephant regretted that it did not crush him to death on that very day when it escaped. But of what use was it then to feel sorry? It could not get away from being his prisoner.

'Oh, Royal Saint! The two stories I narrated are symbolic. But you do not seem to have grasped the meaning. Let me elaborate for your sake.

'The capable king of the gemstone story was none other than you! The gemstone you

were after was your complete renunciation. You studied Vedas and scriptures for its sake. You almost obtained full renunciation; but you missed it because of your injudiciousness. You struggled again to get it. You thought that leaving your wife, relatives, and kingdom was renunciation. You failed in real sacrifice. You couldn't give up your ego. You did not lose attachment to your body, senses etc. So, you did not attain complete renunciation.

'When the wish-fulfilling gemstone of perfect detachment slipped from your hand, you caught hold of a glass piece called 'performance of austerities.' You have exposed yourself to the unnecessary hardship of observing austerities and you have been living a half-contented life. All this happened due to your indiscretion. Indiscretion is the reason behind your loss of wish-fulfilling gem like 'renunciation of I-consciousness' and hanging on to the glass bead like 'observance of austerities'. This is the moral of my story of Wish-fulfilling Gemstone and Glass Piece.

'The elephant of the second story is again you yourself. The mahout was your ignorance. Though you are a highly learned person, you succumbed to ignorance in the way the mighty elephant surrendered to the mahout. The chains that tied down the elephant were your desires. You could somehow shatter them. You gave up even your kingdom.

'Ignorance becomes terribly uneasy if an individual is about to achieve detachment and ultimate Knowledge. It wanted to explode on you. This fact is symbolized by the mahout jumping from the tree. But the cunning effort of ignorance proved futile for the time being. But ignorance was not dead. The mahout did not fracture his limbs. He recovered from the fall. He ran after the elephant. So also ignorance chased you.

'The elephant hiding behind the bushes stands for your taking shelter under the association of noble people. The mahout digging a pit around the bushes represents the trap enveloping you in the form of your refusal to inquire into the Truth. You were caught in the trap. You moved away from surrendering your 'self' having been lost in observing austerities.

'My Dear King, I parodied your life in this story too!'

**68. Sikhidwaj's Complete Renunciation**

**Holy Bachelor:** 'I told you these stories because you mentioned while talking to me that your wife Chuudaala already taught you Self-Knowledge. Why did you not accept her teaching? Did you take it lightly because the person who taught you was a lady? Even if it is so, what stopped you from completely renouncing your desire?'

**Sikhidwaj:** 'Saintly Master! How can you say that? I gave up my kingdom. I abandoned my house. I left my wife. What is deficient in my sacrifice?'

**Holy Bachelor:** 'There is still a lot that you have to give up.'

**Sikhidwaj** (After a pause)**:** Yes, there is something. I am even now attached to this forest dwelling. Right now right here, I give up my attachment to it.'

**Holy Bachelor:** 'There is still a lot that you have to give up.'

**Sikhidwaj** (After thinking for a while)**:** 'I will wipe out my attachment to the hut and its premises.'

**Holy Bachelor:** 'Yet, there is something more.'

**Sikhidwaj** (After further thought): 'Okay, I abandon all the objects I have been using.'

So saying Sikhidwaj collected some dried fire wood, lit a fire and dropped each of his possessions into the fire thanking them for having served him thus far. He threw in the fire the garland used by him for worship, his seat, water vessel and other sundry articles. Not satisfied, he set fire to his hut too. The Holy Bachelor did not stop him from burning down anything; he did not look very pleased either. He said:

**मा मुधाभिनयं कुरु** *mā mudhābhinayaṃ kuru*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 93, Sloka 12

'No use taking useless actions. There is still a lot that you have to abandon!'

This made Sikhidwaj to further consider the matter. He declared that he could still perceive his body with flesh and blood and therefore would like to destroy it by jumping down the steep valley. So saying he moved fast to the edge of the hill. The Holy Bachelor immediately stopped him and addressed him thus:

**Holy Bachelor:** 'Halt, Oh King, hold yourself. What madness has overcome you? Your behavior is like an angry bull that attacks the calf which is nearby. What spiritual aspiration can you pursue if you destroy the body? What you have to reject is the I-consciousness, the feeling that 'I am the body', but not the body itself!'

**Sikhidwaj:** 'How do I get rid of the feeling 'I am the body?'

**Holy Bachelor:** 'Neither the kingdom that you sacrificed nor the body that you want to give up is a primary object. Sacrificing any of them would hardly lead you to perfect renunciation. The root cause for all of these things and the basic support for all types of impressions is the one thing which you have to renounce. Only then will you achieve renunciation from all attachments.

**Sikhidwaj:** 'What is that thing?'

**Holy Bachelor:**

**चित्तमेव भ्रमं विद्धि विद्धि चेतो नरं नृप ।**
**चित्तं विद्धि जगज्जालं चित्तं सर्वमिति स्मृतम् ।।**

*cittameva bhramaṃ viddhi viddhi ceto naraṃ nṛpa |*
*cittaṃ viddhi jagajjālaṃ cittaṃ sarvamiti smṛtam ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 93, Sloka 33

'Just as a seed is the primary cause for the tree, the principal cause for the entire world is mind. Mind creates the illusion. Mind is the author. Mind is the world. Only if you can desert the mind which is at the center of the phenomenal world, will you achieve total detachment. You retained the mind and sacrificed all else. So you did not at all reap the

benefit of renunciation. Had you been able to eschew all attachments, there is no worthy thing that you would not be able to obtain. This is accepted not only by learned Pundits of Vedas but also by Buddhists who do not accept Vedas.

**सर्वत्यागवशादेव हृतकाले कलावपि ।**
**शाक्येन विगताशङ्कं मुनिना मेरुवत्स्थितम् ।।**

*sarvatyāgavaśādeva hṛtakāle kalāvapi |*
*śākyena vigatāśaṅkaṃ muninā meruvatsthitam ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 93, Sloka 61

'Guatam Buddha who will be born in the despicable Kali period will also attain perfect poise and stability akin to the Meru mountain through total detachment. If you adopt this total sacrifice, you will receive the supreme benefit. Observe the way of the world:

**न गृह्णाति हि यत्किंचित्सर्वं तस्मै प्रदीयते ।।**

*na gṛhṇāti hi yatkiṃcitsarvaṃ tasmai pradīyate ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 93, Sloka 62

'Everything is given to the one who does not take anything! Therefore, Oh King:

**सर्वं परित्यज्य महास्वभाव त्यजस्यथो येन च तद्विहाय ।**
**त्यागाभिमानं च मलं विमुच्य विमुक्तरूपो भव भूमिपाल ।।**

*sarvaṃ parityajya mahāsvabhāva tyajasyatho yena ca tadvihāya |*
*tyāgābhimānaṃ ca malaṃ vimucya vimuktarūpo bhava bhūmipāla ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 93, Sloka 64

'First wash away everything with your mind. Then leave the very mind with which you sacrificed all others. What then remains would be the egoistic feeling that 'I have achieved total detachment'. That too is a blemish. You should forsake that also. Then you will be liberated right in this life.'

**Sikhidwaj**: 'However I may consider, the mind appears to be like a crow on a tree. You shoo it away but it soon returns. My condition is just like that. I learnt to control my mind to some extent. You advise me that it is not a question of controlling the mind but to get rid of it. I am not able to grasp how to achieve that. Kindly elucidate, therefore, what is mind and what does it mean to get rid of it.'

**Holy Bachelor**: 'Royal Saint! It is all the same whether we speak of mind or past impressions. They are synonymous words. It is quite easy for a man of discrimination to be free of mind.'

**Sikhidwaj**: 'Master, I am also aware that impressions constitute the mind. It is the substrate for the world. How is it possible to forego it?'

**Holy Bachelor:** ‘Elders with foresight hold that ending the world is equivalent to sacrificing the mind. Sacrifice of the mind is equal to annihilating the mind.’

## 69. Extermination of the Seed that Engenders the Cycle of Births and Deaths

**Sikhidwaj:** ‘Yes, annihilation of the mind is the way. After all it is good to be free of the root problem. How can one go about it?’

**Holy Bachelor:** ‘The seed for mind is I-consciousness. Uproot the tree completely. Body and senses are its branches. When you have to hack down a big tree, you first cut down the branches. Similarly the first step for annihilation of the mind is to get rid of the desire for sensual pleasures. Next acquire the non-dual Self Knowledge. Cut the root of ignorance using the Knowledge of Truth. This is the second step.

‘When once you give up a desire for sensory experiences, those branches will not grow further. Then hack the branches with the sword of Self-inquiry. As you proceed thus, you will be able to slash the root called ignorance.’

**Sikhidwaj:** ‘Dear Saint! It is not enough to cut the root. The seed has also to be burnt. I-consciousness is the seed for the tree of mind, as you already declared. What fire can burn away this seed?’

**Holy Bachelor:** ‘Self Inquiry alone can do that.’

**Sikhidwaj:** ‘Great Sage! I did introspect a lot. I thought over the question: ‘who I am’. Just as the hills and rocks, the trees and rivers are not me, I can easily see that this skin and bones, the flesh and the body, the senses and the mind and I-consciousness are not me. All these are inert things. I am Consciousness. I am clear about it. But who is this Consciousness? Elders describe it as the Witness Consciousness. I am unable to grasp what it is.’

**Holy Bachelor:** "You had understood that right from your skin and bones up to your I-consciousness are inert things and they are not ‘you’. What is there that you do not understand?’

**Sikhidwaj:** ‘It is clear that they are insentient and I am conscious. But I am unable to free myself from identifying with them.

**Holy Bachelor:** ‘My Dear King! Some strange grime is sticking to your intellect. You are being troubled by that very inert, unreal and illusory thing. Right?’

**Sikhidwaj:** ‘That is true. My ego is troubling me. The feeling of attachment aids and abets the ego. I do occasionally succeed in resisting the ego using my intellect. But the ego keeps coming back.’

**Holy Bachelor:** ‘An effect arising out of a real cause can only be taken to be a true effect. If the cause itself has no grounds, its effect is illusory like seeing a second moon. Hence ponder a while about the true reason for your ego – what is the reason and what are its qualities.’

**Sikhidwaj** (after a considerable lapse of time): ‘Ego arises when Pure Consciousness turns

towards perceivable objects. Ego will be absent if all perceivables vanish.'

**Holy Bachelor:** 'But my dear Sir, you agreed that all perceivables are inert substances. How can an inert substance be a reason for ego?'

**Sikhidwaj:** 'We cannot say that they are unreal simply because they are inert. Don't we see them very clearly?'

**Holy Bachelor:** 'Mere appearance is no proof of reality. We are able to see illusory objects too. But do we call them real? We can accept a thing to be true only if it is supported by a proper cause. You have already agreed that body, mind etc. do not have a proper cause. So they cannot be real. Ego engendered by objects like body, mind etc. cannot also be true. Vedas declared:

**अशीररं शरीरेषु अनवस्थेस्ववस्थीतं**

*aśīraraṃ śarīreṣu anavasthesvavasthītaṃ*

Katha Upanishad II - 22

'The unembodied Supreme Self exists in the non-existent bodies. It implies that we feel the presence of the Supreme Self only in the unreal embodied beings.

'Knowledgeable people too have arrived at the same understanding experientially. We do have to infer from all this that ego too (along with mind, body etc.) is equivalent to the son of a barren woman.'

**Sikhidwaj:** 'If we assume that Hiranyagarbha is the cause for the world….?'

**Holy Bachelor:** 'What caused Hiranyagarbha?' You will not find a cause for Hiranyagarbha. So there is no advantage in making such hypotheses.'

**Sikhidwaj:** 'We can say that the Supreme Brahman is the cause for Hiranyagarbha.'

**Holy Bachelor:** 'Of what purpose is such a proposal unless it is sanctioned by Vedas?

**तदेतद्ब्रह्म - अपूर्वमनपरं** *tadetadbrahma - apūrvamanaparaṃ*

'Brahman is not a cause for anything. Nor is it an effect.

'And again,

**नेह नानास्तिकिन्चन** *neha nānāstikincana*

Katha Upanishad IV - 11

'Supreme Brahman is non-dual. There is no second substance.

'Yet again,

**असन्गोह्ययंपुरुषः** *asangohyayaṃpuruṣaḥ*

‘Supreme Brahman has nothing to do with the world.

‘There are a number of statements as above. Vedas do not approve your proposal. If you go by logic, Brahman by definition has no parts. Hence Brahman cannot cause anything. Whichever way you analyze, we do not find a reason for the perturbation we call ego.’

**Sikhidwaj:** ‘Oh Best of Saints! You explained very well. My doubts are cleared. My mind is quietened.’

“So speaking, Sikhidwaj went into deep thoughtless meditation (*Nirvikalpa Samadhi*). The Holy Bachelor was not all that pleased with it. So he woke him up after some time. He told Sikhidwaj that the latter had achieved liberation right in his life (*Jivanmukta*). Sikhidwaj could infer that the Holy Bachelor desired to continue with the sermon. Slowly he resumed his discussion with the Holy bachelor.”

Sage Valmiki covered their discourse in six Sargas – from the 96th to 101st. The 95th Sarga dealt with how an understanding of Self-Knowledge improves with decreasing ignorance and consequent calming down of illusory phenomena. He described in the 96th Sarga how an aspirant should handle percepts seen during the times when the seeker would be out of meditation. He made it clear that the visible objects have not really originated because there was no viable reason for their genesis. He established in the 97th Sarga that there was no possibility for Pure Consciousness to sense a phenomenal world of objects. In order to prove that mind does not truly exist, he showed in the 98th Sarga that the Supreme Brahman transcends the mind. Sikhidwaj declared in the 99th Sarga that he had no more doubts left. In order to make sure that what was taught was firmly grasped by Sikhidwaj, Holy Bachelor examined him with a few questions and continued with his preaching. Sikhidwaj raised a new question in the 100th Sarga. The question was why we could not attribute a ‘beingness’ to the world like that of Brahman. Kumbh, the Bachelor, established that imaginary things could not have ‘existence.’ Later in the 101st Sarga, Sikhidwaj entered into deep meditation. The Holy Bachelor woke him up once again and taught him a few additional things.

Sikhidwaj utilized the opportunity to ask the Holy Bachelor as to why the former could not experience such a deep meditation thus far. Holy Bachelor replied that the stained impressions had to be totally burnt down in addition to acquiring a clear understanding of the Self. The mind would be ready after the destruction of the past impressions and the fructification of Guru’s teaching. Finally Holy Bachelor declared in the 102nd Sarga:

**Holy Bachelor:** ‘My Dear King! I have completed my teaching. You obtained deep meditation. You grasped Supreme Brahman. You may now move about freely as you like. If you wish to continue with deep meditation, please do so. I have to leave now for the court of God Indra. Sage Narada will be arriving there from Brahma’s world. He will be annoyed if I am not there. It is not proper to make the Guru angry. So I shall take leave.’

Even before Sikhidwaj could wave him goodbye, Holy Bachelor disappeared. Soon after that, Sikhidwaj went into deep meditation (*samādhi)*.

Chūdāla reached home by celestial route. She presided over the royal duties as the queen for three days. She returned to Sikhidwaj’s abode in the garb of Kumbh on the fourth day.

**70. Testing Sikhidwaj**

Chūdāla found Sikhidwaj sitting like a statue in deep meditation. She felt very happy. She wished that he should continue his meditation undisturbed till he would attain liberation without body (*videhamukti*) and then she too could leave her body and achieve liberation without body. A seeker's residual karma (effect of previous actions) has to be nil to be able to obtain liberation without the body while he is in meditation. Chūdāla looked at her husband from head to toe with her eyes assessing him whether he had any residual karma. Not satisfied, she touched him with her hand. She felt his body warm.

Yogic texts hold that:

> **देहे यस्मिंस्तु नो चित्तं नापि सत्त्वं च विद्यते ।**
> **स तापे हिमवद्राम पञ्चत्वेन विलीयते ।।**
>
> *dehe yasmiṃstu no cittaṃ nāpi sattvaṃ ca vidyate* |
> *sa tāpe himavadrāma pañcatvena vilīyate* ||
>
> Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 103, Sloka 33

'A body without a mind and with no residual impressions retained would liquefy like a piece of ice in hot sun and merge with the five fundamental elements.'

Chūdāla inferred from the warmth of the body that Sikhidwaj still had some residual impressions left in him though he did not have a mind.

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki used the word '*satvam*' in the above verse to mean residual impressions.]

No purpose is served by obstinately continuing with *samādhi* (deep meditation) when residual impressions still persist in the body. One must be able to experience the residual impressions with equipoise whether they yield happiness or sorrow or desire or anger. Chūdāla thought that Sikhidwaj would have to fulfill the experience of his residual impressions one day or another. She felt that she could not leave him on time and decided to work on him so that he would get that knowledge right away and reach the state that she was already in. She entered Sikhidwaj's *antahkarana* (the four parts of the mind - see glossary) using her yogic powers and created a movement in it. She came out immediately, assumed the form of Kumbh, and sat down near a tree. She began singing mantras from *Sam Ved*.

The melodious sounds of her singing of the hymns entered Sikhidwaj's ears and his mind. The sounds amplified the movement in his mind and he came out of his *samādhi* completely. He was very happy to see his Guru Kumbh when he opened his eyes. He went to him and queried about his welfare. Kumbh for some reason appeared to be a bit gloomy. When Sikhidwaj enquired the reason for his sadness, Kumbh narrated a very strange story.

**Holy Bachelor, Kumbh:** 'My Dear King! Though I was in the Heavens, my thoughts were totally occupied about you. As soon as the proceedings in Indra's court were completed, I took leave of my father and was on my way here in a hurry. A strange thing happened enroute. When I reached the Cloud Sphere, I noticed Sage Durvasa at a distance in the clouds. Normally he dresses very oddly. But he looked very lovely to me at that time. I greeted him and said the same thing to him with a smile. I became a little poetic and told him in a romantic tone as follows:

‘Sage Durvasa! The dirty loin cloth of yours looks like a black saree around you. The lighting in the clouds appears to be your ornaments. The clouds surrounding you seem to be your body curves. You look like a wench in search of a gigolo.’

‘The sage reacted violently at my coquettish words. He chided me for the meaningless natter. He cursed me that I would become a girl in the nights because I compared him to a harlot. He left in a huff even before I could apologize to him.

‘From tonight on, I will be a lady every night. As it is, people say that I have feminine looks. Added to it, if I turn out to be a lady in my prime age, I do not know how I can protect myself.’

Sikhidwaj was dumbfounded at this strange story. He couldn’t say a word. Kumbh himself continued after a while.

‘Let it be my King! Why should I worry? Womanhood is for the body. I am not the body. Let the body have its experiences. What do I lose by that?’

**Sikhidwaj:** ‘Godly Saint! What you say is quite true. If people of your caliber feel sorrow at the current suffrage (*prārabdha*), what would be the condition of ordinary folk? You are talking just from an empirical viewpoint. Does happiness or sorrow have any meaning at all for you?’

Both of them got involved thus in a discussion of Truth till the end of the day. At sunset they observed the formal evening prayers. In the middle of their prayers itself, sun had set and Kumbh gradually started to turn to be a lady. Surprisingly everything including the ornaments worn on the body too changed. Kumbh was visibly sorry at the change. The king too was uncomfortable with the development. However, they soon recovered themselves. They sat below the tree that night. Neither of them could sleep. Chūdāla was seriously worried about the way to proceed with her teaching of conquering desire, anger etc. Sikhidwaj was glum at the plight of his Guru.

By day break, Kumbh turned out to be a man again. They both spent time together during the day roaming around the forest and indulging in scriptural debates and meditation. Kumbh turned to be a lady again by night. Their worry was a little reduced and they were getting accustomed to the situation. Several days went by in this way.

In the course of their conversation, Lady Kumbh said in a casual way as follows:

**Lady Kumbh:** ‘My Dear King! I get this femininity as god-given. It stays for half a day only. Still I feel like marrying a suitable person and taking advantage of my femininity. The question, however, is who would marry a person who is a lady for half a day and a man for the other half? Further, who is so pious to be fit to marry me? As I ponder over these questions, my mind gets focused on you, who is already my friend. If you concur,

**इच्छानिच्छे फले त्यक्त्वा समन्तात्सर्ववस्तुषु ।**
**वयं न सेच्छा नानिच्छाः कुर्मस्तेनेदमीप्सितम् ।।**

*icchānicche phale tyaktvā samantātsarvavastuṣu |*
*vayaṃ na secchā nānicchāḥ kurmastenedamīpsitam ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 106, Sloka 7

‘It is common for everybody in the world to develop likes and dislikes about the things around them. As a result they get either happiness or misery. Some people sacrifice desires in order to overcome such bondage. But without being aware, they get attached to the feeling of sacrificing. Thus they are unable to get over bondage. Instead of that let us experience whatever intentions come to our mind without having desire or desirelessness. I want to enjoy my womanhood right now. Do not stop me please.’

**Sikhidwaj:** ‘My friend! We have already crossed the state of reaping the fruit of our actions. Please do go ahead and do as you please.’

**Kumbh:** ‘In that case, let us marry tonight as there is an auspicious moment this night itself.’

Both Kumbh and Sikhidwaj consented to get married that night. Kumbh gathered together necessary goods for the marriage ritual from the forest and also used his yogic powers. Kumbh turned into a lady by night. Without calling for a priest, they chanted the required mantras themselves and completed swiftly the prescribed ritual. They spent the night as husband and wife.

Kumbh became a man again by day. They were just friends during the day and roamed around the forest. They were husband and wife during the nights. Kumbh used to take leave occasionally and go to the kingdom. As Chūdāla, she used to attend to the royal duties and obligations and return to Sikhidwaj. They spent several days together in that manner. Chūdāla desired to test if Sikhidwaj still had some remnant desire for pleasures. She used her yogic magic powers. She materialized God Indra with all his attendants and followers before their hut. Sikhidwaj received Indra, bowed to him and worshipped him. Politely he queried the reason for his visit. Indra smiled a little and replied as follows:

**Indra:** ‘Oh Royal Saint! We have been hearing about you for quite some time. We desired to meet you in person and hence we have come here. Here is the celestial airplane. Heavenly comforts befitting a liberated individual like you are awaiting you. Liberated individuals accept things as they come.’

**Sikhidwaj:** ‘King of Gods! The entire world is like heaven for me. Supreme happiness overflows from every tiny spot. I do not feel I have to go somewhere for happiness.

**Indra:** ‘What you say is very true. But liberated individuals of the past enjoyed unexpected comforts that have come their way. To do so is quite appropriate in my opinion.’

**Sikhidwaj:** (remained silent).

**Indra:** ‘It looks that you are not willing. Perhaps there is no purpose in my remaining here any more.’

**Sikhidwaj:** ‘I cannot come now. We shall consider later.’

**Indra:** ‘May Everything be Auspicious for you!’

Blessing thus, God Indra vanished. Chūdāla was very happy at this development. She assessed the situation thinking that, ‘Though he did not have a desire for heaven, he behaved politely with Indra. So it can be concluded that he achieved equipoise. I have yet to see how he behaves with respect to hatred and jealousy.’

Kumbh turned to be a lady again on that night. Sikhidwaj completed his evening rituals and reached the hut where they used to sleep. He saw lady Kumbh entwined in an intimate position with some handsome person. Sikhidwaj did not get agitated at that sight. He felt that he should not disturb their pleasure. He immediately turned back without making any sound, sat below a tree and went into deep meditation. After a few minutes, lady Kumbh approached him hurriedly with a contrite face. Lady Kumbh begged him not to be angry as he (lady Kumbh) did it in haste.

Sikhidwaj smiled at her. He said to her: 'My Girl! You have to pardon me for having come in the way of your enjoyment. I am not angry at anybody. Myself and Kumbh conquered likes and dislikes. You are not Kumbh. You are an ordinary being subjected to the curse of Durvasa. Look for your own pleasure. As we are moving amongst saints, I have to be a little sensitive to the feelings of the saints. So from now onwards, we shall remain merely as friends and not as husband and wife.'

**71. Sikhidwaj's Attainment**

With the above test, Chūdāla was completely happy about the Self-Knowledge of Sikhidwaj. She weighed the matters for a second and shed the garb of lady Kumbh. She assumed her original form as Chūdāla. Sikhidwaj was stunned to see his wife coming out of lady Kumbh. He could not fully recognize her. With a little bit of hesitation, he asked her:

**Sikhidwaj:** 'Who are you? I notice a strong resemblance to my wife in you.'

**Chūdāla:** 'My Master, I am indeed your wife! Do not have a doubt about it. I changed my form as Saint Kumbh and also as Lady Kumbh. I assumed these forms because of my intense desire to preach you Self-Knowledge. Now that you are also accomplished in yogic powers, take a second to examine with your clairvoyance. You will come to know the truth!'

**Sikhidwaj** (Immediately took up lotus posture, controlled his breath and meditated. He got up soon, hugged his wife affectionately and spoke with wet eyes): 'Hey Chūdāla ! How much trouble have you gone through for my sake! Devoted wives bear with patience any amount of torture for the sake of their husbands. You are at the top as a devoted wife!'

**Chūdāla:** 'My Lord! I could not stand your wasteful efforts wasting time in totally useless austerities. In my selfish interest to relieve myself of my anguish, I shadowed you to teach Self Knowledge. This is purely my self interest; so you need not have to compliment me.'

**Sikhidwaj:** 'Chūdāla, May such Self-interest Be with Every Wife!'

**Chūdāla:** 'My Lord! You understood Truth now. You transcended likes and dislikes. What do you wish for in this state of yours? How do you assess your past actions?'

**Sikhidwaj:** 'Chūdāla! I lived in total fantasy in the past. You were the center of attraction for my fantasies. Now I am fully immersed in Knowledge. The center of focus for my Knowledge is again you yourself. I am not any more deluded by the world now.

भ्रमेणाहं विमुक्तोऽस्मि संसारेणालिलोचने ।
न तुष्टोस्मि न खिन्नोऽस्मि नायमस्मि न चेतरत् ।।

*bhrameṇāhaṃ vimukto'smi saṃsāreṇālilocane |*
*na tuṣṭosmi na khinno'smi nāyamasmi na cetarat ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 109, Sloka 45

यत्तदस्मि तदेवास्मि वक्तुं शक्रोमि नेतरत् ।।

*yattadasmi tadevāsmi vaktuṃ śakromi netarat ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 109, Sloka 48

'I am neither contented; nor discontented. I am neither this person nor that person. I am neither the effect nor the cause. I am neither gross nor subtle. These are all substances that can be contradicted (= things that disappear on knowing the Truth). I am the incontrovertible Truth. Whatever That I am, I am That. I cannot express it any more in words. You are my Guru. I salute you. With your kind grace, I crossed the cycle of births and deaths. I will not step into that rot again.'

**Chūdāla:** 'What do you want now?'

**Sikhidwaj:** 'Neither do I want anything nor do I deny anything. Whatever you want, that will be my want too. I will neither appreciate nor condemn. Please do as it pleases you.'

**Chūdāla:** 'Let me then tell you what I think.

यादृगेषणमस्माकं तादृशं तदनेषणम् ।।

*yādṛgeṣaṇamasmākaṃ tādṛśaṃ tadaneṣaṇam ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 109, Sloka 58

'Having a desire and not having a desire are equivalent to both of us. It makes no difference for us. We have to experientially consume the balance of current suffrage (prārabdha). So let us spend some time in our kingdom and attain liberation without body.'

**Sikhidwaj:** 'Chūdāla! If you had a residual desire for luxuries left in you, comforts in heaven are awaiting us. Why did you deny them?'

**Chūdāla:** 'Lord! I do not have a desire for any comforts or luxuries. I do not want even yogic manifestations. I shall accept whatever comes on by itself. That is all. I shall forever be without any arousal.'

**Sikhidwaj:** 'Well said! Your mind had transcended the pairs of opposites. We shall spend the rest of our life taking things as they come.'

"Chūdāla and Sikhidwaj spent the day thus discussing till sunset. At sunset, they attended to the obligatory ablutions. They retired for the night as two love birds. Next morning Chūdāla created with her yogic powers a golden throne and a pearl pot filled with waters from all rivers and oceans. She seated her husband on that throne.

She crowned him by sprinkling holy water from the pearl pot. The king was happy with all smiles. He seated her beside him as the queen. He asked her to create with her powers full-fledged defense forces of the four types (foot soldiers, cavalry, elephant and chariot forces) so that they could reach their kingdom in royal splendor. She did accordingly. They mounted elephants and made a grand entry into their kingdom accompanied by the army.

"The fully enlightened couple reigned the kingdom for ten thousand years. Finally they attained eternal salvation."

Sage Vasishta closed the story of Chūdāla with the following words:

**Vasishta:** "Rama! You should emulate Sikhidwaj and perform actions as per the demands of the occasion and be free of sorrow. Spend your life following the Goddess of Wealth, Goddess of Wisdom and Goddess of Salvation at the same time. Not only king Sikhidwaj, Brihaspati's son Kach too received similar teaching on Self-Knowledge. May you also obtain Truth like Kach."

**Rama:** "Revered Teacher! Please tell me the story of Kach."

[**Note:** We pointed out at the beginning of the present volume that Sage Vasishta divided the Chapter: Nirvana into two Books. The first book was reserved for a description of the steps to be followed in the path of *Samādhi* Yoga leading to eternally peaceful Self-Knowledge. He depicted the life-stories of a few great people who attained *samādhi* Yoga so far. Now he plans to close the chapter presenting a classification of the steps involved in the Sevenfold Path into three divisions: steps in the initial stage; steps in the middle stage and steps in the final stage. As a curtain raiser towards this end, he takes up the story of Kach.

In the 58th Sarga of the Chapter on Sustenance (Sthiti Prakarana), Sage Vasishta made a brief reference to Kach. He talked there about the ecstasy Kach had experienced on attaining Supreme Self and the melodious tunes he sang rapturously. We presented them under the subhead: Annihilation of Impressions (Yoga Vasishta, Book 4, Sthiti Prakarana, Sustenance). Sage Vasishta simply highlighted the experience of Kach there but did not spell out the effort and practices that went into it. He now describes the method adopted by Kach and relates it to the steps in the path of Yoga.]

**72. The Sermon Received by Kach**

**Vasishta:** "Rama, you have heard of Kach, son of Brihaspati. I talked previously about the experience of Self by Kach. Now I shall tell you about the effort behind that achievement.

"Ever since he had returned home from the abode of his Guru, Kach reflected on Self continuously. He used to feel that he got it; but he couldn't grasp it totally. One fine day when he found his father somewhat relaxed, he posed his question to him: 'Respected Father! The world is like a stifling cage. How does one come out of it?'

"The Guru of Gods, Brihaspati responded thus: 'My Son ! It is not just a cage. It is a treacherous ocean full of crocodiles. It is very difficult to swim across. If you desire to cross it, better fly off. And there is only one way to fly. It is by total renunciation. You should discard calmly and unemotionally without regretting later in hind sight.'

"Kach remained quiet hearing this advice. He reflected on it a little and renounced everything mentally. He left his home in heaven and moved to a forest. His father, Brihaspati, did not get disheartened over the development. Gain or loss, it is all the same to great people! Eight years had gone by. One day he remembered his son. So he went in search of him. He met him in a jungle. They exchanged affectionate pleasantries for a short time. Kach addressed his father with his problem again. 'Father, it has been eight years since I had given up everything. Still my mind has not been peaceful.' Brihaspati heard him with compassion. His only advice was:

**सर्वमेव त्यज** *sarvameva tyaja*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 111, Sloka 15

'Leave '*everything*' itself.'

"So saying he flew away by celestial path without giving an opportunity for another word. Kach seriously considered his father's words. He threw away the codpiece he was wearing. He practiced spending time without a sense of 'me'. Three years had passed. But he did not have peace. Brihaspati visited him once again. Kach addressed his father with concern: 'Father, I threw away even my codpiece. Still peace eludes me. What am I to do?' His father looked at his son with kindness. He said:

**चित्तं सर्वमिति प्राहुस्तत्त्यक्त्वा पुत्र राजसे ।**
**चित्तत्यागं विदुः सर्वत्यागं सर्वविदो जनाः ।।**

*cittaṃ sarvamiti prāhustattyaktvā putra rājase |*
*cittatyāgaṃ viduḥ sarvatyāgaṃ sarvavido janāḥ ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 111, Sloka 21

'Everything' ('*sarvam*') stands for mind! It will do well for you if you can let go of the mind. Elders describe the sacrifice of mind as perfect renunciation.' Uttering this, he disappeared immediately.

"Kach tried to follow his father. He searched for him in the sky. But he could not locate his father anywhere. He felt bad that his father did not clear his doubts fully. He returned to the forest and pondered over the matter. 'Father's advice was to get rid of the mind. I left many things thus far. I left my home. I got rid of my clothes. I gave up attachment to my body. I let go of my senses. Father implies that none of these constitute the mind. I could decipher that much. But what is mind? Where does it exist? I do not have answers for these questions.'

"Kach brooded over for a long time. He did not find any solution. He decided to go back to his father. After eleven years he returned home. He bowed to his father and posed his questions to him.'

**Brihaspati:** 'My Son! Every creature thinks of itself as "I", 'me'. This I-consciousness, the feel of 'me', the ego is referred to as mind.'

**Kach:** 'You advise me to give up I-consciousness. When the vibration of I-consciousness goes away, the person dies. For whom is salvation after the death of the person?'

**Brihaspati:** 'No, Son. If ego is a truly existing substance, its removal will result in the death of man. But that is not the truth.

'I-consciousness is an illusory phenomenon. It is neither true nor untrue. There exists Pure Consciousness which is True forever. Knowledge about it is also eternally true. Pure Consciousness being non-dual, Knowledge about It too is non-dual. Another thing cannot be born out of a non-dual substance. But you do observe I-consciousness. Where has it arisen? How did it originate?'

**Kach:** 'We may suppose that there is some substance and ego is born out of it.'

**Brihaspati:** 'The only one thing that exists prior to I-consciousness is Pure Consciousness. Like one continuous ocean, it pervades everything. If anything is born out of That, it has to resemble That. A dissimilar thing cannot originate from That. Dry soil cannot come out of a river. Hence we cannot admit that I-consciousness has originated from Pure Consciousness.'

**Kach:** 'What is the need for an intricate logical analysis ? We can directly see ego.'

**Brihaspati:** 'That is true, we notice it. But what do you call a thing if it appears to have been born and existing without any causal entities giving rise to its birth?'

**Kach:** 'I would call it a magical thing.'

**Brihaspati:** 'That's exactly what I am saying. Ego is a magical thing. An illusion. It is a non-existing thing with an apparent existence. Knowledge destroys all illusory phenomena. Hence, My Son Kach,

**अयं सोऽहमिति व्यर्थं प्रत्ययं त्यज पुत्रक ।**

*ayaṃ so'hamiti vyarthaṃ pratyayaṃ tyaja putraka* |

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 111, Sloka 39

'Get rid of the delimiting I-consciousness which brings the distinction of 'we' and 'they'.

**दिक्कालाद्यनवच्छिन्नं स्वच्छं नित्योदितं ततम् ।**
**सर्वार्थमयमेकार्थचिन्मात्रममलं भवान् ।।**

*dikkālādyanavacchinnaṃ svacchaṃ nityoditaṃ tatam* |
*sarvārthamayamekārthacinmātramamalaṃ bhavān* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 111, Sloka 40

Invariant of time and measures, unlimited by quarters (directions), eternal and pervading all, substratum for all forms, the One only having no second, pure essence is you, yourself. Therefore, My Son forsake the limiting ego. Welcome the limitless I-Consciousness. This is the only way to discard the mind.'

"With this clarification, Kach could decipher the matter, drop the mind right there and then and achieve liberation while living."

[**Note:** Sage Vasishta discussed the issue of the death of an individual with the ending of mind two or three times in the past. He gives considerable importance to this point because it is an issue that usually brings a scare to the spiritual aspirant during his last stages on the Path of Knowledge. He desires to help out the seeker in overcoming the fear of giving up the mind. Some people argue that only a void will be left on the complete eradication of the mind. Sage Vasishta also desires to emphasize that what remains finally is Pure Consciousness and not a void. He was concise in his presentation of the topic here because it had been covered earlier extensively.

The sage closed the story of Kach encouraging Rama to cede I-consciousness as was done by Kach and to abide in silence. In order to underline the fact that I-consciousness has no real existence, he narrated another non-story.]

**73. The Non-Story of the Illusory Man**

**Vasishta:** "Rama!

**मायायन्त्रमयः पुमान् ।** *māyāyantramayaḥ pumān* |

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 112, Sloka 16

"There lived once a man produced by a magic machine. He was quite handsome and resembled castles in the clouds and water in a mirage. He desired to live forever. He searched for a way to achieve immortality. He concluded that because he depended on space for his living, he could live forever if space existed permanently.

"After considerable deliberation on the ways and means of saving space, he constructed a house with solid walls. Room-space (a roomful of space) existed now in the house. He expected the house to stay forever and along with it he hoped that room-space too would last forever. He developed an attachment to the room-space.

"After a hundred years or so, the house collapsed. Along with it the room-space too collapsed. He was very sad and inconsolable. He composed himself and thought over the matter. He got a well dug. With that came well-space. He was attached to the well-space and was quite happy.

"After a thousand years or so, the well collapsed. The pit was filled up. As a result, the well- space disappeared. The illusory man cried over it a lot. With renewed hope, he made a pot. With that came the pot-space (potful of space). But the pot broke soon after. He bemoaned very much that he and the space that supported him had become insecure. Next he constructed a palatial mansion. But it too crumbled over time.

"Thinking over the matter considerably, he carved a mortar (a block of rock in which a cup- shaped hole is made and is used to crush or pound substances with a pestle). Thus mortar- space came into existence. He felt that it would be everlasting. But on a hot summer day the mortar broke into pieces. He was heartbroken and disconsolate.

"Rama! In spite of so much effort, the illusory man ended up with misery and could not achieve what he wanted."

**Rama:** "Teacher, please explain the significance of the symbolism in the story."

**Vasishta:** "I-consciousness is the illusory person. Illusion is space. Space does not have a name or form. But people create nomenclature like room-space, well-space, palace-space, mortar-space and so on. The names are attributed to space depending on the objects. Unless the objects end, the space will not end. Likewise, people of the world give several names to ego-consciousness like individual (*jīva*), intellect, mind, memory (*chitta*) , illusion, nature (*prakṛiti*), intention, conception, time, minutiae (an infinitesimal time division) etc. etc. When there is life, it is called an individual. When it is a decision making faculty, it is called intellect. Because it reflects on external things, it is called mind. When past things are remembered, it is called memory. Because it creates non-existing things, it is called an illusion. As it has got the quality of change, it is called nature. When the future is anticipated, it is called intention. When it constructs things in imagination, it is called conception. When it is the cause for change and related matters, it is called time. When time is divided and sliced into smaller fractions, it is called minutiae.

"Rama! These are all just names and not real things. There is no scope for a hollow space to germinate from Consciousness which does not have even a hair-crack. There is no scope for moving air to germinate from insentient motionless hollow of space. There is no scope for light with a form to germinate from formless air. Cool waters cannot take birth from hot light. Hard earth cannot germinate from soft water. Thus no 'thing' whatsoever in this world has a proper causal factor for origination. We can infer from this:

**न जायते न म्रियते क्वचित्किंचित्कदाचन ।**
**जगद्विवर्तरूपेण केवलं ब्रह्म जृम्भते ।।**

*na jāyate na mriyate kvacitkiṃcitkadācana* |
*jagadvivartarūpeṇa kevalaṃ brahma jṛmbhate* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 113, Sloka 19

"No thing originates in this world any time anywhere. Nor is there death for anything. The Supreme Brahman manifests as the world by superimposition."

**74. The Story of Bhringeeswar**

**Vasishta:** "Rama! Comprehend the subject matter clearly and be ever happy! Cogitate well and discriminate between Truth and untruth. Reject the untruth. Stay firmly in Truth. You are not the doer. You are not the experiencer. You are not the sacrificer. Be the Grand Author. Be the Grand Lord. Be the Grand Renouncer. These three constitute 'The Trio of Ritual Vows'. The ritual trio was preached by Lord Shiva to Bhringeeswar in the past. I shall detail the story for you. Please listen.

"Once upon a time there lived Bhringeeswar on the mountain ranges of Meru. He followed spiritual practices for the attainment of Self-Knowledge. He went to Lord Shiva one day and addressed Him thus:

**Bhingeeswar:** 'My Lord! The waves in the ocean of worldly phantamagoria are not calming down in spite of my best efforts. Wave after wave keeps transgressing without a break. Is there an easy way to arrest the waves?'

**Lord Shiva:**

सर्वाः शङ्काः परित्यज्य धैर्यमालम्ब्य शाश्वतम् ।
महाभोक्ता महाकर्ता महात्यागी भवानघ ।।

*sarvāḥ śaṅkāḥ parityajya dhairyamālambya śāśvatam |*
*mahābhoktā mahākartā mahātyāgī bhavānagha ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 115, Sloka 9

'My Son! Keep at bay the questions and doubts in your mind. Firm up your mind. Then be the Grand Experiencer. Become the Grand Doer. Be the Grand Renouncer. There is no action superior to the Trio of Ritual Vows to be performed.'

**Brhingeeswar:** 'Master! Who is a Grand Doer? Who is a Grand Experiencer? Who is a Grand Renouncer?'

**Lord Shiva:** 'Son! There are righteous deeds and deeds that are not righteous. Do not go about your actions intending to do the good ones and rejecting the bad ones. Accept things as they come. Do not weigh actions assessing whether they yield sin or merit, happiness or misery or other such pairs of opposites. The Grand Doer is one who remains a mere witness, calm and composed, even-minded in actions and notices only the unchanging Beingness amidst all the modifications.

The Grand Experiencer is one who savors both happiness and sorrow with equipoise. He does not wish for or reject anything that comes as a result of his current suffrage (*prārabdha*). He remains stable as a non-doer without the projecting power of his mind when perceiving things with his senses.

The Grand Renouncer is one who gives up everything negating the perceptual world from the absolute viewpoint of Self-Knowledge. He does not consider some things to be good and some others to be bad, some things to be useful and some others to be useless and so on. He regards righteousness to be as much an illusion as what is not righteous. Happiness and sorrow are equally illusory to him. He reckons that to have a desire or to be desireless is equally false.

[**Note:** The 115th Sarga contains 28 verses (from 11th to 38th) establishing the truth of the Trio of Ritual Vows. They may sound redundant to a casual reader. But each verse is a spotlight of illumination for spiritual seekers. We presented above a very concise explanation of these verses.]

**Vasishta:** "Rama! Understand thoroughly the Trio of Ritual Vows explained by Lord Shiva Himself and adopt it. If you act accordingly, you will not have misery from your actions."

**Rama:** "Are not mind and I-consciousness the same? When the mind is getting eradicated and impressions attenuated, the nominal mind that is still residual is called '*sattva*'. Will you please shed some light on the qualities of '*sattva*'?"

**Vasishta:** "A lotus does not get wet even when it is in water. Likewise, *sattva* does not get affected by defects such as greed, desire etc. even under pressure. That is its principal quality.

This quality gradually blossoms up beginning from the fourth stage in the Seven Step Yoga path. In order to get to this state, one should proceed with Self inquiry beginning with the questions like 'Who am I?', 'How did the world come about?', and 'What is Self-Knowledge?' &c. King Ikshwaaku, the first man of your subsect of lineage achieved liberation by this method. I shall tell you his story in brief."

**75. The Dialogue Between Ikshwaaku and Manu**

**Vasishta**: "When King Ikshwaaku was ruling the country, a question came up in his mind. His question was: what is the reason for the world that we encounter - a world that is in perpetual chaos with problems of happiness or sorrow and predicament of aging and death? He deliberated on the question for years together within himself. He couldn't find an answer.

"One day unexpectedly the ancestral person of his lineage, Manu Prajapati arrived while Ikshwaaku was holding court. Ikshwaaku received him with due formalities and enquired where from he (Manu) had come. Manu replied that he was coming from Brahmalok (the world of Brahma). On hearing this, Ikshwaaku thought of posing his questions to him, but was initially hesitant to do so. However, he later mustered courage to place before Manu his doubts.

**Ikshwaaku:** 'How did the creation come about? What is its true form? What are its limits? What do the Vedas talk about ? Whatever may be its cause, I have been struggling in the phenomenal world like a bird caught in a net. How do I get free?'

**Manu** (feeling obviously very happy at the questions): 'Emperor Ikshwaaku! I am very pleased that you have begun pondering over such questions. I shall gladly respond to you.

'In one word, the world that you perceive is non-existent. Like a castle in the air, it appears to be present even though it is, in fact, not there. It is like water in a mirage. It has no form. Nor does it tie you down. Because there is no bondage, there is no question of liberation either! Forget about bondage and liberation; let go of those thoughts. It is best to be just natural. It is not easy to understand this. So let me explain a little.

'What exists truly is Pure Consciousness only. Owing to the past impressions, the reflections of Pure Consciousness develop as *antahkarana* (the sum total of the four mental functions – thoughts, memory, intellect and ego). The tendencies of nescience that are hidden in *antahkarana* manifest as individuals. These individuals go through cycles of births and deaths. They are attached to likes and dislikes and indulge themselves in transactions with others.

'When we travel, we come across plenty of people on our way. We just observe them. But we do not entertain any particular feelings of likes and dislikes about them. We have to train our senses to react similarly. We do meet many fanciful things in the world. The senses must stop running after or away from them either with love or hatred.

'The main cause for the senses to run after things is the thought that 'I am the body'. Abandon that thought to begin with. Calm down the thoughts in the mind. If the flutter of thoughts in the mind ends, you will remain stable even if the senses move around. That stable state is the state of Supreme Brahman.'

**Ikshwaaku:** "Why does the Supreme Brahman get modified when in contact with '*māya*'? How does the stable state return with the arrest of the movement in the mind?'

**Manu:** 'My Dear King! The Supreme Brahman is omnipresent. He has two powers. These are the power of Nescience and the power of Knowledge. The power of Nescience possesses the property of fecundity. So it can engender things. Knowledge possesses the property of destruction. Knowledge destroys the creation made by nescience. Power of nescience grows with attachment. Knowledge grows with detachment. Ordinary men are unable to cognize the omnipresent Supreme Brahman. They notice only the non-existential world. The lone reason for this is nescience. Knowledge alone can displace it. With the practice of *Samadhi*, the strength of Knowledge increases resulting in non-perception of objects. A seeker should gradually progress on the path of Yoga and reach the final state.'

**76. Changes in the Nomenclature of the Steps in the Path of Yoga**

[**Note:** In the 118th Sarga of the Chapter: Creation, Sage Vasishta enumerated seven steps in the path of Knowledge. These were:

5. Desire for Enlightenment or *Subhechcha*.
6. Reflection or *vicārana*.
7. Tenuous Mind or *tanumānasa*.
8. Attainment of Realization or *sattvāpatti*.
9. Non-Attachment or *asamśakti*.
10. Non-Perception of Objects or *padarthābhāvana*.
11. Ineffability or *turyaga*.

Manu Prajapati proposes another set of seven steps in the path of Yoga. However, these run almost parallel to the above with little difference. Manu Prajapati describes the steps from an aspirant's viewpoint giving emphasis on practice. The classification given in the Chapter: Creation is based more from the viewpoint of a Jivanmukta. The reader may please keep this in mind as we proceed further.]

**Manu:** 'The seven steps are as follows:

1. Advancement in Wisdom (*Prajna vridhi*):

Obtain scriptural knowledge by associating yourself with noble people. Make every effort to acquire Fourfold Aids of Seeking (see Glossary). This is the first step and is equivalent to 'Listening' ( *śravana sthanīya*)'. It is the same as Desire for Enlightenment.

[**Note:** The matter with regard to the Fourfold Aids of Seeking was discussed under the section '*sādhana catuśtaya sampatti*' in the Chapter: Behavior of an Aspirant, Part I of our Series on Yoga Vasishta.]

2. Reflection (*vicārana*):

It is the same as the second step in the path of Knowledge.

3. Non-Attachment (*asamśakti*):

This is the same as contemplation and meditation (*nidhidhyāsa*). It is equivalent to Tenuous Mind in the path of Knowledge.

4. Absorption (*vilāpinee*):

This is a stage when impressions (begin to) disintegrate. It is equivalent to the stage of Attainment of Realization in the Knowledge path.

5. Pure Knowledge (*Sudha sam vinmayee*):

This is a stage when impressions continue to disintegrate. It is equivalent to the Step of Non-Attachment in the Knowledge path.

6. Self-Knowledge (*Swa sam vedana ruupa*):

This is also a stage where impressions are annihilated. It is equivalent to the stage of Non-Perception of Objects in the Knowledge path.

7. Pure Bliss (*Anandaika ghanākāra*):

This is a stage where impressions are eradicated. It is equivalent to the stage of Ineffability in the Knowledge path.

'The first three stages, viz. Advancement in Wisdom, Reflection and Non-Attachment are comparable to 'Wakeful' state. Absorption is like a dream state. The fifth step, Pure Knowledge, is comparable to deep sleep. The sixth stage Self-Knowledge is equal to *Turiya* state. The seventh and final stage, Pure Bliss, is equal to the state beyond *Turiya*. This is the true stage of liberation in the current life.

'In other words, the first three steps are related to the individual with an unceasing desire for liberation. The fourth describes a mature seeker about to be liberated. The fifth, sixth and seventh are relative stages in liberation.

'End the entire perceivable world by sublating the effect along with its cause utilizing your Knowledge of Truth. Realize that the omnipresent perfect substratum is 'me'. May you forever abide in that state!

'Dear King! There are two names for the same substance. One name is individual self (*jīva*). The other name is Supreme Self. Difference in the names arises because of the thought processes of the transacting individual. Distinguish and clearly understand the thought processes involved in the pull down effect on the Supreme Self giving rise to the name of 'individual self' and the push up effect giving rise to the name Supreme Self.

**यावद्विषयभोगाशा जीवाख्या तावदात्मनः ।**
**अविवेकेन संपन्ना साप्याशा हि न वस्तुतः ।।**
**विवेकवशतो याता क्षयमाशा यदा तदा ।**
**आत्मा जीवत्वमुत्सृज्य ब्रह्मतामेत्यनामयः ।।**

*yāvadviṣayabhogāśā jīvākhyā tāvadātmanaḥ |*
*avivekena saṃpannā sāpyāśā hi na vastutaḥ ||*
*vivekavaśato yātā kṣayamāśā yadā tadā |*
*ātmā jīvatvamutsṛjya brahmatāmetyanāmayaḥ ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 121, Sloka 1-2

'Remember that Supreme Self retains the name of 'individual self' as long as a desire to enjoy the objective world remains.

**Ikshwaaku:** 'Wherefrom did this desire arise?'

**Manu:** 'It comes out of ignorance. Therefore, it is untrue.'

**Ikshwaaku:** 'How does it go away?'

**Manu:** 'It originated because of ignorance. Therefore, its antidote is Knowledge. The moment desire is terminated using discretion, 'self' loses the name of the individual. It will be called the Supreme Brahman.

**प्रशान्तशास्त्रार्थविचारचापलो**
**निवृत्तनानारसकाव्यकौतुकः ।**
**निरस्तनिःशेषविकल्पविप्लवः**
**समः सुखं तिष्ठति शाश्वतात्मकः ।।**

*praśāntaśāstrārthavicāracāpalo*
*nivṛttanānārasakāvyakautukaḥ |*
*Nirastaniḥśeṣavikalpaviplavaḥ*
*samaḥ sukhaṃ tiṣṭhati śāśvatātmakaḥ ||*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 121, Sloka 14

'A hunger to discuss the intricacies of scriptural texts evaporates in an individual who has transcended desire and achieved Self-Knowledge. All the movements caused by thoughts and counter thoughts will disappear. He will be even minded, eternal and everlastingly happy.

'Such a Yogi is a King of Kings irrespective of the condition he may be in. He is eternally content though he may be a pauper. Even learned Pundits cannot grasp the essence of his life. He may or may not do anything. He may live long or die soon. He may leave his body in a pious pilgrimage center or at the house of a lowliest of meat eaters. He is a liberated individual. Such a Yogi is worthy of reverence. This state cannot be obtained through observance of any amount of austerities. It cannot be attained by any sacrificial rituals. It can be achieved only through the knowledge obtained by serving with devotion individuals who are knowledgeable of Self.'

**Vasishta:** "Rama! Manu left immediately to the world of Brahma after his teaching. Emperor Ikshwaaku followed Manu's instructions and stayed firmly in his original form."

[**Note:** Sage Vasishta continued his discourse for four more Sargas before closing the session for the day. Imparting Knowledge to Ikshwaaku was completed with the 122nd Sarga. The 123rd Sarga begins with a clarification sought by Rama on the subject matter. The content of the Sargas 123 to 126 comprises a review of the day's teaching presented as a dialogue between Sage Vasishta and Rama.]

**77. The Greatness of a jnāni (A Liberated Individual)**

**Rama:** "Revered Teacher! You described the condition of a liberated individual towards the end of the teaching imparted to Ikshwaaku. You indicate that he is worthy of worship irrespective of his condition - whether he is deprived or privileged, whether he passes away in a holy place or at the house of a lowly meat consumer, whether he lives for long or short-lived. Does it not amount to say that the actions of a *jnāni* (liberated individual) and *ajnāni* (an ignorant person) are just about the same in the empirical matters of the world? If a *jnāni* has no freedom even in the way he casts off his body, in what way is a *jnāni* superior?"

**Vasishta:** "A *jnāni* does not have anything great in him other than an experiential enjoyment of bliss without any airs whatsoever."

**Rama:** "What about special accomplishments like Anima (see Glossary) and other Yogic Attainments (*Siddhis*)?"

**Vasishta:** "There is nothing extraordinary about them. They can be attained through the practice of certain mantras or austerities. One does not need to know the essence of Truth to obtain them. You have to have a desire to get them to start with. A Knower of Truth does not have any desire. Desirelessness is the special quality of a *jnāni*."

[**Note:** Sage Vasishta discussed these issues a couple of times before. He described in the 42nd Sarga of the Chapter: The Calm Down about the residual impressions in the mind of a liberated individual act. In the 56th Sarga of the same Chapter, he talked of the differences between the followers of Meditation-centered and Transaction-centered Knowers of Truth. The Story of Suraghu was narrated by way of an illustration. So the sage did not elaborately explain once again the issue. Instead he told an allegorical story to establish the matter conclusively.]

**Vasishta:** "Rama! The Supreme Self turns to be an individual (*jīva)* when he forgets his true nature. The individual will be the Supreme Self back again once he knows his true nature. Let me give you an example.

"Once upon a time there lived a very orthodox Brahmin. He was attracted to a lady of lower caste. He did not commit any wrong beyond fantasizing her as his lady love. His spiritual practices, however, got badly affected by these amoral thoughts. As a result he was reduced to a person of low caste. It is the same case with the Supreme Brahman too. He gets an idea to associate with intellect etc. Desire for enjoyment arises from it. Consequently, his perfect nature is eclipsed. He becomes an ordinary individual.

"The five fundamental elements originate in two ways in every creation. From the angle of the adjunct that has formed from the five elements, the elements are objects of experience. If we consider from the angle of consciousness confined within the adjuncts, the five elements are called experiencers. There is no true enabling causal force in existence prior to these two. They are generated purely by the strength of Hiranyagarbha's thoughts."

**Rama:** “How can that be possible?”

**Vasishta:** “Why not ? You see earthen pots in your dream. Does the material clay or the potter’s wheel as the enabling causes exist for the dream pot? It happens in a similar way here too.”

**Rama:** “Can’t we attribute it to the past karma?”

**Vasishta:** “You see the reflection of the sun oscillating in the waves of a lake. The reason for the oscillation of the sun's reflection in the water is the movement in the waves. What is the reason for the reflection? The wave motion is not the cause. After the sun is reflected, the movement in the waves could cause the reflection to appear to move. In a like manner, after Ishwar becomes an individual (*jīva*), karma (effect of past actions) becomes the cause for experiencing the pairs of opposites like happiness and sorrow. Karma can be compared to the wave motion because, after all, it is also a movement. So we have to accept that the experience and the experienced originated without a reason!

“The reason for happiness or sorrow is karma. Intention (or thought) is the cause for karma. The reason for intention is the contact of the ‘receiver’ and ‘receivables’. Receivers are the senses. Receivables are the worldly objects. As stated in Kathopanishad,

**मा भव ग्राह्यभावात्मा ग्राह्यकात्मा च मा भव ।**
**भावनामखिलां त्यक्त्वा यच्छिष्टं तन्मयो भव ।।**

mā bhava grāhyabhāvātmā grāhyakātmā ca mā bhava |
bhāvanāmakhilāṃ tyaktvā yacchiṣṭaṃ tanmayo bhava ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 124, Sloka 8

“When a man experiences an object, he identifies himself with it. You should avoid identifying yourself with the object. Do not identify yourself with your senses either. Identification arises out of thoughts. Drop mentation totally. When mentation is completely eradicated, the Pure Witness Consciousness remains. Achieve identity with the Witness Consciousness.

**अजस्रं यं यमेवार्थं पतत्यक्षगणोऽनघ ।**
**बध्यते तत्र रागेण तत्रारागेण मुच्यते ।।**

*ajasraṃ yaṃ yamevārthaṃ patatyakṣagaṇo'nagha* |
*badhyate tatra rāgeṇa tatrārāgeṇa mucyate* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 124, Sloka 9

“A man gets attached to any thing that is repeatedly perceived by the senses. One gets liberated if one transforms the attachment to detachment. Subdue the mind with mind!

“There are three forms to a living being, viz. the gross, the subtle and the transcendental. The physical body is the gross form. Thoughts are the subtle form. The third is the Pure Consciousness. Abide in complete identity with It.”

**Rama:** "Revered Teacher! Popularly the gross body is compared to the wakeful state, subtle body to dream state and the causal body to deep sleep state. The transcendental form you are talking about seems to be the *Turiya* state which is beyond the three states. The *Turiya* state exists in the wakeful, dream and deep sleep states. We are unable to recognize it as a distinct entity because it occurs completely blended with each of the states. Can you uncover and explain a little more about the transcendental state?"

**Vasishta:** "In fact there is nothing much to be said. The *Turiya* state is none other than The Witness Consciousness State. The mind pervades all and exists, like salt in water, fully dissolved in every state. I shall give an illustration for this condition.

"A hunter shot an arrow at an animal. The arrow hit the animal but the animal escaped. The hunter chased it for some distance but missed it. He met a saint on the way. He enquired from the saint whether the saint could tell him in which direction the animal ran away. The saint had a confused look on his face. He replied as follows:

'My Dear Sir! There is no I-consciousness left in me. Sensorial functions do not go on in the absence of ego. I am unaware of even awake, dream and deep sleep states. I notice only the fourth state of *Turiya*. And in here lies no percept at all'

"The hunter thought the saint was a mad cap. He went away in search of the beast.

Rama! This explains in short the experience in the state of *Turiya*.

"You should bear in your mind an important point when you study scriptural quotations. Vedas and epics can only break dualism; but they cannot reveal what exactly is there. Some people inquire into the transcendental Truth purely at an intellectual level without considering the evidence from Vedas. Some of them maintain that 'void is Brahman'. Some others called Wisdom as Brahman. Yet others described that Ishwar is Brahman. Please do not indulge yourself in such idle debates. Cast off all of these and take refuge in Absolute Silence. Abiding thus, even if you perform actions that happen to come by because of your current suffrage (*prārabhdha*), it is equivalent to inaction."

**78. Process of Ascension on the Path of Yoga**

**Rama:** "Teacher! You discussed the topic of The Steps on the Path of Yoga earlier. But you did not spell out the process of ascension on the Path of Yoga. You did not also describe the characteristics of the Yogis at different Stages of progress. Will you please educate us on these two issues?"

[**Note:** Sage Vasishta discussed the Path of Yoga in the 118th Sarga of the Yoga Vasishta - Book 3 - Utpatti Prakarana - Chapter on Origination and again in the 120th Sarga in the current Chapter: Nirvana, Yoga Vasishta, Book 6. He gave different names to the steps in the two places. We have already commented on the equivalence of the steps while discussing the matter in the 120th Sarga. We noted that the two names, Path of Yoga and Path of Knowledge, were used as synonyms. In response to the poser of Rama, Sage Vasishta based his reply on the Path of Knowledge discussed in the Yoga Vasishta - Book 3 - Utpatti Prakarana - Chapter on Origination to some extent. However, he changed the names once again in his response to Rama.]

**Vasishta:** "Rama! Vedas talk of two approaches. One is the Path of Action (*pravṛitti*) and the other is the Path of Renunciation (*nivṛitti*). A person on the Path of Action will not think of liberation, come what may. He will be fully immersed in the obligatory or optional actions prescribed in the Vedas and mythological texts motivated by desire.

1. In course of time after many births, discretion emerges in him owing to some favorable action of his. Consequently, detachment develops in him. Then desire abates. He will have increased interest in spiritual matters. He will begin to inquire about liberation. This is the first step in the Path of Yoga.
   The step is named '*Subhecha*' (Longing for Liberation). '*Subh*' means liberation. Because desire (*icha*) for liberation germinates at this stage, it is called *Subhecha*.

2. He will look for suitable Gurus for 'listening' (to spiritual knowledge), 'reflection on what is heard' etc. He will churn up the issue in his mind. The six defects in him fade away and he will begin to comprehend the subject. This is the second step. It is christened, *vicārana* (Inquiry/Reflection). Analysis and assessment will be the dominant character both internally and externally during this stage. Hence the name.

3. Doubts on different statements found in scriptural texts will reduce gradually. He will have a tendency to live in such hermitages which observe austerities. His detachment grows. His scriptural practices improve. He gets focused on Brahman. All of this happens because of a decrease in attachment towards worldly objects. Hence this step is called '*Asamsakti*' (Non-Attachment).

"The principal descriptor of this step, Non-Attachment, comes in two flavors. The first one is the ordinary non-attachment. It takes the form of: 'I am not the doer or experiencer'. It develops with increasing association with noble people and the practices of listening, reflection etc.

"As the ordinary non-attachment matures, the thinking that 'I am not the doer, I am not the experience, Ishwar is the doer etc.' will also eclipse and the seeker remains silent absorbed in 'non-doership'. Contemplation and meditation begin at this stage. Slowly the seeker will go into 'meditation without thoughts (*nirvikalpa samādhi*)'. This is the detachment of a high order. This is the third step, the true Non-Attachment'.

"Out of these three steps, it is difficult to say how the first step, *Subhecha*, begins. It can happen as a result of the accumulated meritorious deeds of several births. It could also arise out of detachment. Or it can germinate through peace or sometimes through devotion. There can be a multitude of reasons for its genesis. An aspirant should watch through which mode *Subhecha* shows up in him and pursue that line of approach in a fitting manner. As the approach gathers strength, the first step ensues on its own. The subsequent steps automatically follow when the first step gets consolidated."

**Rama:** "Teacher Sir, say one is not born in a pious family. He does not have an opportunity to associate with noble people. He does not have interest in spiritual discussions. Does such a person have any scope at all for achieving liberation?"

**Vasishta:** "The cycle of births and deaths is certain for such a person. In the cycle of innumerable births and deaths, somewhere sometime his fortune should click so that he can get hold of the first step. There is no other way for him."

**Rama:** "Okay, let it be so. Say a person is lucky to ascend the first step. He takes up prayers and practices. What happens to him just in case he dies either in the first or second or third or fourth step? Has he begun again from square one in his next birth?"

**Vasishta:** "It will not be so. As he progresses on the path of yoga, his sins will dwindle. If he dies during one of the steps, he will be born in meritorious worlds depending on the specific stage he was in. He will enjoy luxuries and comforts there for some time. He will be born as a man in wealthy families or in the houses of righteous and noble people. By the force of the past impressions, he will again take up the same type of yoga practices that he was following previously. The world is seen with a sense of separation in the three steps described thus far. Hence these steps are grouped as 'Wakeful state steps'. Those who are in these steps are respected in the world to some extent. Others may take them as role models and adopt the path of Yoga."

[**Note:** The third step described by Sage Vasishta was Tenuous Mind as per the Table in the Chapter: Creation. The fifth step there was called Non-Attachment. For some reason, Sage Vasishta called here the third step itself as Non-Attachment. The subsequent 4th and 5th Steps have not been given any names. The sixth step had the name of Non-Perception of objects. He calls it Turiya. The seventh was named *Turyaga*. Now it is being called as '*videha muktata'*. The nomenclature thus stands changed three times! From this, we may infer that he had no particular fancy or faith in assigning specific names and he was more concerned with the content of the subject matter. We may also note that he classifies the steps here to correspond to the wakeful, dream and deep sleep states.]

4. Witnessing the attributeless Consciousness commences in the fourth step. As the third step consolidates, the fourth will automatically follow. The seeker in the fourth step considers the world as no more than a dream. Hence it is called the Dream state step. (The name of this step in the Yoga Vasishta - Book 3 - Utpatti Prakarana - Chapter on Origination is Attainment of Realization (*sattvapatti*).

5. No traces of dualism will persist into the fifth step. The seeker will have a steady experience of his true form. Though the seeker may apparently perform some tasks externally, he will be internally experiencing a state similar to deep sleep. Therefore, it is christened as the deep sleep state step. The name given earlier was Non-Attachment. The seeker in this step is called *Brahmavit vara* (Better Knower of Brahman).

6. With further strengthening of the fifth step, the seeker enters the sixth step. The name given to it is *Turiya*. He is a perfect Jivanmukta (one liberated with body). He retains a body mainly because of the force of residual current suffrage. Externally and internally he is in perfect bliss. The previous name for the step was Non- Perception of Objects. One who is in this step is called *Brhamvit varīyan* (Master Knower of Brahman).

7. The seventh step is called *videha muktata*. This cannot be described in words. This state is called 'Shiv'. Some called it Supreme Brahman. Yet others said, it is the discrimination of *prakṛiti* and Purusha. Some called it Heaven. Thus it has been described by different people with differing names. There is no question of any misery for one who attains this state. This step was given the name of *Turyaga* previously. One who attains this state is described as Brahmvit varishta (Excellent Knower of Brahman).

"Want is an impediment at every one of the steps. Desire for this or that obstructs the progress every inch of the path. The desire appears in several forms like senses, impressions, perception of the world and so on.

**एतावानेव संसार इदमस्त्विति यन्मनः ।।** *etāvāneva saṃsāra idamastviti yanmanaḥ* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 126, Sloka 85

"Phenomenal world is desire for this or that.

"Likes and dislikes taint the mind as long as desire persists. No sermons will be comprehended by the mind. Desire should be resisted whenever it rises through the practice of *pratyahāra* (withdrawal of mind) and other procedures. The mind should be trained not to dwell on objects. Intentions should be curtailed.

**ऊर्ध्वबाहुर्विरौम्येष न च कश्चिच्छृणोति तत् ।**
**असंकल्पः परं श्रेयः स किमन्तर्न भाव्यते ।।**

*ūrdhvabāhurviraumyeṣa na ca kaścicchṛṇoti tat* |
*asaṃkalpaḥ paraṃ śreyaḥ sa kimantarna bhāvyate* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 126, Sloka 94

"I raise my hands shouting that it is most auspicious if one keeps away from thought, but none cares to listen to me. Why don't they follow this simple thing?

"Rama! Let me repeat.

**बहुनात्र किमुक्तेन संक्षेपादिदमुच्यते ।**
**संकल्पनं परो बन्धस्तदभावो विमुक्तता ।।**

*bahunātra kimuktena saṃkṣepādidamucyate* |
*saṃkalpanaṃ paro bandhastadabhāvo vimuktatā* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 126, Sloka 97

"Why to say more? I shall summarize for you. Thoughts bind. Severing them is Liberation. Recognize this fact and give up the feelings of 'Me' and 'Mine'.

**अहंममेति संविदन्न दुःखतो विमुच्यते ।**
**असंविदन्विमुच्यते यदीप्सितं समाचर ।।**

*ahaṃmameti saṃvidanna duḥkhato vimucyate* |
*asaṃvidanvimucyate yadīpsitaṃ samācara* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 126, Sloka 102

"Misery will be inevitable as long as the feelings of 'Me' and 'Mine' persist. Sorrow ends with the extermination of the feeling of 'Me' and 'Mine'. You will be liberated. Now you choose what you like."

[**Note:** The teaching planned by Sage Valmiki for incorporation in this book - Yoga Vasishta, Book 6, Nirvana Prakarana - purvārdham – Chapter on Liberation ends here.

At the beginning of the treatise, Yoga Vasishta, Sage Valmiki declared:

**नात्यन्तमज्ञो नोत ज्ञः सोऽस्मिञ्छास्त्रेऽधिकारवान्**

*nātyantamajño nota jñaḥ so'smiñchāstre'dhikāravān*

Yoga Vasishta, Vairagya Prakaraṇa, Sarga 2, Sloka 2

'Yoga Vasishta is an aid for an average person who is neither totally ignorant nor completely knowledgeable (of Brahman).'

The teaching so far imparted, however, has been addressed to Sri Rama, an incarnation of God. Therefore, it remains to be established that the discourses given by Sage Vasishta are applicable to an average seeker. So Sage Valmiki added two Sargas (Sargas 127 and 128) on this theme as a dialogue between Sage Valmiki and Bharadwaj, his disciple. Bharadwaj was the one who sang the story of Rama in the assembly of Gods. He also happened to be the first man to have heard the recitation of Yoga Vasishta.]

**79. Sermon Given to Bharadwaj**

**Bharadwaj:** "Revered Teacher! Sage Vasishta taught profound Knowledge to Rama. Rama was an embodiment of Lord Vishnu. Did he have further doubts or did he remain silent after obtaining Self- Knowledge?

"Strictly speaking, Sri Rama was an incarnation of the Supreme God. He assumed to have ignorance and discussed the matter in such great detail for the benefit of others. What difficulty could He have had in achieving Self-Knowledge?

"What is the fate of simple folk like me ? My practice is nominal. My ignorance is quite dense. That is why I am very anxious."

**Valmiki:** "Bharadwaj! Rama had no more doubts. He was established in quietitude."

**Bharadwaj:** "Sir! I heard through you the entire conversation that took place between Rama and Sage Vasishta. The surprising thing, nonetheless, is that I am still as I was whereas Rama attained deep meditation. How can underlings like me get liberated? "

**Valmiki:** "Bharadwaj! I narrated faithfully and completely held back nothing from you. Now ponder over the matter, mull it over in your mind, and come to a decision by yourself. That is something you have to do by yourself. The dialogue between Rama and Sage Vasishta proceeded according to the Vedic dictum:

**यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते । येन जातानि जीवन्ति । यत्प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति ।**

*yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante | yena jātāni jīvanti | yatprayantyabhisaṃviśanti |*

Tattariya Upanishad, Brigu Valli -1

"In addition there is a method of analysis of the essence of Truth based on the three states of wakefulness, dream and deep sleep states. As it was an easily understood approach, Sage Vasishta did not specifically deal with it other than making a casual reference to it. I shall expand on it for your benefit here.

"My Friend! You are aware of the significance of the Four Great Vedic Aphorisms. In spite of it, you are your own impediment. Why is it so? Follow the techniques I shall describe to you at least now and attain a Pure mind.

"As a matter of fact, I do not have to tell you much about the three states. The thought that the world is true is called 'Wakeful sleep'. A man says that he is awake. But in truth he is asleep in ignorance. That is the reason it is called 'Wakeful sleep'. If the light of Consciousness glows in his mind, he will be out of ignorance. With the ending of ignorance, the world dissolves. Hence you should discard ignorance and light up the lamp of Knowledge.

**प्राङ्नास्ति चरमे नास्ति वस्तु सर्वमिदं सखे ।**
**विद्धि मध्येऽपि तन्नास्ति स्वप्नवृत्तमिदं जगत् ।।**

*prāṅnāsti carame nāsti vastu sarvamidaṃ sakhe* |
*viddhi madhye'pi tannāsti svapnavṛttamidaṃ jagat* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 127, Sloka 19

"My Friend! The world did not exist in the past. It will not be there finally. Hence it does not have any existence in-between too. Yet we see it. Hence realize that it is no more than a dream.

"Past sins are the main reason why we are unable to appreciate this, though we may have heard it a number of times. So first take up the worship of Brahman with attributes in order to be freed from sins. The sins of men are the lasso in the hands of Ishwar. Pray to Ishwar for the termination of sins. Next cultivate detachment and abide in it. Watch the drama of life calmly. Jettison inauspicious misery. Contemplate on the ever Blissful and Pure Supreme Self. There is nothing more to be done."

**Bharadwaj:** "Revered Master! By your kind grace I have learnt what all has to be known.

**न वैराग्यात्परो बन्धुर्न संसारात्परो रिपुः ।।**

*na vairāgyātparo bandhurna saṃsārātparo ripuḥ* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 127, Sloka 59

"I could understand that 'There is no better benefactor than detachment. There is no enemy worse than the phenomenal world.'

"Sir, I have a humble request. Kindly summarize the essence of the elaborate teaching of Sage Vasishta in a few words for me."

### 80. Stages in The Practice – Absorption (*pravilāpana*)

**Valmiki:** "Bharadwaj! What happened to your skill of abstracting the gist after a comprehensive analysis? Anyways, I shall do it for you. Sage Vasishta taught the very same things that were stated in the scriptures like Mandukya and other Upanishads. I shall present the salient points in a sequential order.

1. Achieve the Six virtues of Seeking viz. *Sama, dama etc*. With their help quit taking prohibited actions and also do not act propelled by desires.
2. Cut down yearning for sensory pleasures.
3. Keep your mind gentle and receptive.
4. Acquire stability in posture.
5. Purify your mind with commitment and take up repeated recitation (*japa*) of 'Aum'. Practice breath control simultaneously and sanctify the mind.
6. Withdraw the sense organs from the objects of the world.
7. Begin the practice of absorption (*pravilāpana*). A well known maxim goes as follows:

**कारण व्यतिरेकेन कार्यसाभावा निश्चयः**
**प्रविलापनमित्येतत तदनन्यत्व निश्चयः**

*kāraṇa vyatirekena kāryasābhāvā niścayaḥ*
*pravilāpanamityetata tadananyatva niścayaḥ*

"Between cause and effect, you will find that an effect does not exist without the prior existence of a cause. A pot cannot exist beyond clay. So proceed at every stage firmly establishing that the effect is no different from the cause. Such a deduction is called absorption. The following statement of Chandogya Upanishad conveys the process of absorption.

**वाचारम्भणं विकारो नामधेयं मृत्तिकेत्येव सत्यम् ॥**

*vācārambhaṇaṃ vikāro nāmadheyaṃ mṛttiketyeva satyam* ||

Chandogyopanishad VI - i - 4

Pot is only a name. It connotes a change in shape. The true substance is clay.

"Hence, Bharadwaj, evaluate on the above lines the body, senses, mind, intellect, the individual-self inside etc. one after another. Assess the reason by which each one is produced. Resolve with unswerving intellect that each of the effects is untrue. Take each effect as a lower step and ascend to the next higher step (its cause). Let me illustrate the process for your convenience.

a. Start with the assumption that 'I am the gross physical body.' The gross physical body comprising skin and bones etc. has come from the composite god-form, Virat Purusha. Therefore, Virat is its cause. The gross physical body is the effect. Hence the physical body is unreal. Therefore, 'I am not the physical body, I am Virat Purusha.' Contemplate thus. For the sake of brevity, this process is described as absorption of the physical body in Virat Purusha. Proceed likewise in understanding all the other forthcoming steps also.

b. Virat Purusha stands for the composite of gross physical beings. The cause for Virat Purusha is the composite of subtle beings (made up of subtle *pancha bhutas*). The name of the composite of subtle beings is Hiranyagarbha. Absorb the individual 'self' inside your gross body into Hiranyagarbha.

c. The cause for Hiranyagarbha is the unmanifested (*avyakrita*), made up of three qualities, and maya is the adjunct (*māyopadhika*). Absorb Hiranyagarbha in Avyakrita.

d. The cause for Avyakrita is the primordial substrate for all, Pure Brahman. Absorb Avyakrita in Pure Brahman.

e. After having stabilized in the process of absorption, link the process of absorption with the *japa* of Aum. This is done as follows:

i. The 'a' sound in 'aum' is Virat.
ii. The 'u' sound in 'aum' is Hiranyagarbha.
iii. The 'm' sound in 'aum' is Avyakrita.
iv. The half note at the end of 'aum' is Pure Brahman.
So absorb the 'a' sound in 'u' and 'u' sound in 'm' and 'm' sound in half note while chanting Aum.
v. There is another type of absorption. Here the process starts with parts of the body.

It goes as follows:
a. Soil is the cause for flesh in the body. Think that flesh in the body is made of soil. Absorb the flesh in soil.
b. Water is the cause for the blood in the body. So absorb the blood in water.
c. The heat, energy, speech etc. in the body are said to be part of luminescence (*tejas*). Absorb all of them in the great luminescence.
d. Life-breath and other winds, movement in the body etc. are known as part of air. Absorb them in great air.
e. Absorb the space in the body with the great space.
f. Absorb the senses too in their respective cause. The cause for the senses is subtle five elements. They are referred to by their respective gods. Absorb each of the senses with their respective god. It is done as follows:
i. The sense organ ear is absorbed in the subtle space called the God of Quarters.
ii. The sense organ skin is absorbed in the subtle air called Lightning God.
iii. The sense of vision should be absorbed in the subtle fire called Aditya.
iv. The sense of taste should be absorbed in the subtle water God called Varun.
v. The sense of nose should be absorbed in the subtle earth called Aswini gods.

(Now the action organs are taken up).
vi. The power of speech should be absorbed in fire.
vii. The hands should be absorbed in Indra.
viii. The legs should be absorbed in the God Vsihnu.
ix. The excretory organs should be absorbed in the God Mitra.
x. The genitals should be absorbed in Prajapati Kashyap.
xi. In the same way the life-force inside should be absorbed in the God of Wind.
xii. Absorb the mind on the moon.
xiii. Absorb intellect in Brahma (Creator).

f. Bharadwaj! I have narrated the absorption procedure as sanctioned in the Vedas. These are not made up by me. The godly powers of the composite body have descended as sensory mechanisms of the individual gross body. Therefore, appreciate that it was the scriptures which have stipulated accordingly.

g.. The last stage of absorption in the second method is also the thought that 'I am Virat Purusha'. Virat is also called Arthanareeshwar (Ishwar with half male and half female body). He is the substratum for the five elements.

h. I have already told you that Virat has to be absorbed in Hiranyagarbha. There is yet another method for it. Let me tell you about that procedure.

a. There is an earth twice the size of the current universe formed by quintuplication. Twice the size of that earth occurs in quintuplicated water. Twice the size of that water is the quintuplicated fire. Twice the size of that fire is the quintuplicated wind. Twice the size of that wind is the quintuplicated space.

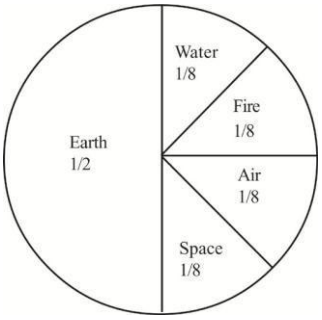
b. Some texts refer to the five elements to be ten times bigger than one another. This will be the case if the calculations are done without considering quintuplication. I have given my description keeping in mind the process of quintuplication."

[**Note:** Vedantins classify creation into three types:

1. Causal Creation;
2. Subtle Creation; and
3. Gross Creation.

The causal creation is the root of Nature. The veiling power and projection power that emanate from Root Nature form the subtle creation. The veiling power refers to the property of concealing the true existing Thing. The projecting power refers to the property of showing a multitude of objects in place what actually is there. Because the projecting power is a property of the Root Nature, it has three qualities. The subtle five elements originate from it. These are also known as unquintuplicated five elements. Sensory organs generate from their *sattva* quality. The five action organs emanate from the *rajas* quality. The residual *tamas* qualities existing in all of them get intermixed with each other in an orderly fashion.

"If we take subtle earth as an example, we have to divide it into two parts. One half of it stays as it is. The other half is divided into four parts. In the place of those four parts, an eighth part of each of the remaining elements merges with it as shown in the figure below.




The figure represents the quintuplicated earth. The quintuplicated earth is the Gross Earth which can be perceived by human senses. The subtle earth cannot be perceived by the sense organs. The quintuplication process works in the same way with respect to the other elements too. None of the five elements sensed by man are pure. Every one of them is admixed with parts of the remaining four elements. The admixing of the five elements is called 'Quintuplication.' The resultant five elements are the quintuplicated five elements.

12. Apart from these calculations, what concerns us the most in this section on absorption is that one element is the cause for another element. The effect is lesser than the cause. We have to proceed step by step with absorption. The cause for earth being water, absorb earth in water. Water has to be absorbed in fire. Fire has to be absorbed in the wind. Wind has to be absorbed in space.

13. A seeker will be left with the subtle body at the end of the process of absorption.

**वासना भूतसूक्ष्माश्च कर्माविद्ये तथैव च ।। १८**
**दशेन्द्रियमनोबुद्धिरेतल्लिङ्गं विदुर्बुधाः ।**

*vāsanā bhūtasūkṣmāśca karmāvidye tathaiva ca || 18*
*daśendriyamanobuddhiretalliṅgaṃ vidurbudhāḥ |*

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 128, Sloka 19

"Subtle body as referred to here is the composite of the following 20 entities:
a. Past impressions;
b. Five subtle elements;
c. Karma;
d. Ignorance;
e. Five sense organs and five action organs;
f. Mind; and
g. Intellect.

14. By this process of absorption, the seeker transcends the gross adjuncts and reaches the individual subtle body. With this, it amounts to say that the physical body of the individual is gone and only the subtle body remains. The subtle part of the individual has to be absorbed in Hiranyagarbha, who is the composite of subtle bodies.

15. You may question how Hiranyagarbha could be a composite of subtle bodies because he is known to be the four-faced Brahma having born from a lotus and hence he should have an individual body. It is not difficult to find the answer. Hiranyagarbha who is the composite of subtle bodies created a body with four faces in order to facilitate creation. Because it is only a fictional body, the seeker need not worry about it. The seeker should absorb himself into the form of Hiranyagarbha.

16. As we have explained under the steps 7. (d) and (e) you have to absorb Hiranyagarbha in Avyakrita and Avyakrita in turn into Pure Consciousness.

17. Followers of Sankhya call the Avyakrita state as 'prakṛiti.' Vedantins call it illusion (*māya*). Logicians call them atoms. Buddhists call it enveloping ignorance. At the time of great Dissolution, the worldly objects merge in Avyakrita. They will lose any independent 'beingness' then. At the time of next phase of creation, they come out of Avyakrita. Creation begins with space. Dissolution takes place in the reverse order. That is the reason that absorption process also goes in the reverse order.

18. Mandukya Upanishad says in its seventh mantra:

**नान्तः प्रजानां न बहिः प्रज्ञां न प्रज्ञां न प्रज्ञां न प्रज्ञानघनां**

*nāntaḥ prajānāṃ na bahiḥ prajñāṃ na prajñāṃ na prajñāṃ na prajñānaghanāṃ*

'It is neither internal nor external consciousness. It is neither with consciousness nor without consciousness. It is also not consciousness solidified. The way to renunciation is suggested in the eighth mantra of the Upanishad.

अद्रस्य मव्यवहार्य मग्राःय मलक्षण मचिन्त्य मव्यपदेष्य
मेकात्मा प्रत्ययसारं प्रपन्चोपसमं शिवम् शान्त मद्वैतं चतुर्थं मन्यन्ते

*adrsya mavyavahārya magrāḥya malakṣaṇa macintya mavyapadeṣya*
*mekātmā pratyayasāraṃ prapancopasamaṃ śivam śānta madvaitaṃ caturthaṃ manyant*e

'It is not a percept. It cannot be transacted in an empirical way. It is not a receivable. It does not have any attributes. It cannot be expressed in words. It cannot be imagined. It is the essence of non-dual Knowledge of Self. The world dissolves in it. It is auspicious. It is pacific. It is Non-Dual. It is taken to be the fourth stage. The Upanishad indicates the thing worthy of meditation through this sentence. Great Sages preach the process of absorption based on these Upanishad statements.

19. Meditating thus, the subtle body who is the meditator should also be absorbed. With this process of absorption, one has to alleviate the root nescience and experience the Supreme Brahman.

"Bharadwaj! That sums up the vast teaching of Sage Vasishta."

**Bharadwaj:** "Revered Teacher! Now I fully understand the philosophy. I am free of the subtle body (*lingadeha*). I am certain that I am Non-Dual Supreme Brahman."

**Valmiki:** " In that case renounce all actions and be established in the Supreme Brahman."

**81. Renunciation of Rituals –When and By Whom ?**

**Bharadwaj:** "Sir, I have just one more question. How does an individual conduct himself after the attainment of liberation right in this life? Does he need to perform rituals or not? If he has to perform rituals, is it necessary that he has to observe the entire daily routine of karmas or is it adequate if he performs just desireless (unmotivated) actions?"

**Valmiki:** "What a Question after fully listening to Renunciation of all actions?"

**Bhradwaj:** "I am a bit confused because of certain statements in scriptures.

यावज्जेवमग्निहोत्रम् जुहोति (यजुर्वेदं)

*yāvajjivamagnihotram juhoti (yajurvedaṃ)*

"Perform rituals at an altar as long as you are alive.

कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतꣳ समाः । इसावास्योपनिषत

*kurvanneveha karmāṇi jijīviṣecchataꣳ samāḥ |* *isāvāsyopaniṣat*

"While performing rituals in this life, you should wish to live for a hundred years.

"These Vedic statements ordain us to observe rituals for the whole of our lifetime. Sometimes people perform large scale sacrificial rites. One may skip performing the daily worship at an altar in times of conducting sacrificial rites.

But after the sacrificial rites are completed, one has to resume the daily rituals. Likewise, even if one drops rituals so long as one is on the path of seeking Self-Knowledge, I expect that one may have to resume the rituals after the attainment of Knowledge."

**Valmiki:** "Bharadwaj! First of all, you have to abandon goal oriented rituals. Next, give up rituals which are contra to Knowledge. Then take up the Path of Knowledge. As you progress step by step, you will yourself know what rituals are to be given up at what time.

"Current suffrage will be different for different people. Therefore, it is not necessary that the conduct of all seekers at a particular stage should be exactly the same. When one transcends the three states and achieves the fourth state of *Turiya*, he will be a *jnāni* and will be free of dualistic concepts. Hence questions regarding rituals do not concern him. A *jnāni* , after attaining Brahman may perform rituals due to his current suffrage.

"As part of attaining Self-Knowledge, an individual who has accepted the Vividisha Sanyasa would give up all rituals as per the stipulated procedures relevant to Vividisha Sanyasa. There is no scope for him to resume rituals at any time later. (Absolute renunciation by a Knower of Self is the real Sanyasa and is called Vidwat Sanyasa. One who knows about the Supreme Self from the scriptures and not experientially should give up stipulated karmas, if he would like to take up the Path of Knowledge. There are prescribed procedures for this type of renunciation which is called Vividisha Sanyasa. This is one of the four ashramas of life).

"The prime thing is to enlighten your mind. You will reach the same goal whether you take up the path of Knowledge or the path of Yoga. Never stop practicing. Vedas firmly hold that practice maketh perfect. Discard everything and firmly abide yourself in practice."

## 82. Bringing Back Rama from samādhi

**Bharadwaj:** "Revered Teacher! Rama obtained Oneness in Brahman following the path of Knowledge. How could Sage Vasishta introduce him back into the empirical transactional world? If I understand that, I may also be able to conduct myself in the world while continuing to abide in Brahman."

**Valmiki:** "Sage Viswamitra addressed the following words on noticing Rama in deep mediation (*samādhi*)."

**Viswamitra:** 'Oh, Great One, Sage Vasishta! Your proficiency is truly amazing. You proved your competence as a Guru. Your disciple entered Thoughtless Deep Meditation (*Nirvikalpa samādhi*) no sooner than you imparted Self-Knowledge to him. A true Guru is one who could awaken Knowledge in the disciple by his audition, touch or teaching.

'Oh Best of Sages, Vasishta! Rama is pure in his mind. Therefore, he could immediately catch up with your teaching. In fact, the disciple's maturity and intelligence are more important than the power of teaching by the Guru in the matter of enlightenment. If both the Guru and disciple are equally eminent as is the case here, what can be said further!

'Vasishta, Greatest of the Sages! Please bestow your grace on us and bring back Rama from *samādhi*. We have certain obligations to be accomplished and plenty of work to be carried out by Rama in the interest of the public good.

‘I shall take him to the Siddha hermitage. He has to destroy the demons there. Later he has to rescue Ahalya from her curse. He has to break the bow of Shiva and marry Sita. He has to tame Parasuram’s arrogance. He will then have to proceed to live in a forest leaving his kingdom. On this pretext, he will sanctify many sages and pilgrimage centers. He will establish that womanizers will be destroyed in the world by killing Ravan who abducts Sita. He will resurrect the monkeys who die in the war. He will prove his tact in the ways of the world by asking Sita to enter fire. He will then be coronated. Though he is a Jivanmukta and he himself has nothing to desire through action, he will demonstrate to the world the importance of action by performing rituals and sacrificial rites. He will be able to lead people who are eligible to perform rites to superior worlds like that of Brahma.

‘Not only that, he will be able to liberate whoever has the fortune of having his audition or whoever has thought of him, listened to him or approached him.

‘Hey, everybody! Salute Sri Rama. Mere salutation is enough.No other practices are required. Every one of you will be able to abide in Thoughtless Deep Meditation.’

**Valmiki:** “When Sage Viswamitra was thus giving his stimulating oration engrossed in deep devotion, all the assembled saints, siddhas and others were immersed in meditating on Rama. Some bowed to him. Others concentrated their thoughts on him. Yet others recollected the future story of Rama’s life. As every one of them was accomplished in clairvoyance, they relished narrating to each other the future story of Rama. Sage Vasishta, however, remained with a dignified smile. He asked Sage Viswamitra whether Rama was a God or a man in his past life.

**Viswamitra:** ‘Sage Vasishta! Take it from me, he is not a mere human being nor an ordinary god. He is Vaasudev himself. He is the ultimate Truth to be known through the Upanishads. He is Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwar. Not only Dasarath, His biological father in the present life but also Ravan, the person who regards Him to be his enemy is also blessed. He is undoubtedly Lord Vishnu, who lives on the ocean of Milky Way.

‘Sage Vasishta, please bring him back into the empirical world.’

**Vasishta:** ‘Rama, the Mighty Armed One! Great Man! Self-realized One! This is not the time you can rest. Please arise. Make the world happy. You cannot afford to be absorbed in permanent *samādhi* until you complete all the jobs for the good of the society. Please do take care of the transient regal and godly obligations. After that you may be immersed in the happiness of *samādhi*!’

**Valmiki:** “Though Sage Vasishta said those words quite loudly, Rama who was in deep *samādhi* could not hear them. Sage Vasishta assumed a subtle form with his powers and entered into the *sushumna* nerve of Rama. He reached Rama’s lotus-like-heart through that nerve. He gathered there Rama’s melted subtle body and pushed it into his (Rama’s) nerves. With consciousness thus flowing into his nerves, Rama slowly opened his eyes but remained with blank looks.

“Sage Vasishta returned to his own body. He repeated his earlier words again. This time around Rama could hear the words. He felt that he should not disobey his Guru’s instructions. He replied to Sage Vasishta as follows:

**Rama:** 'Respected Master! Because of your kind Grace, this individual is neither capable of doing nor not doing any action. Nevertheless, your instructions cannot be disregarded. This is a Vedic stipulation.

**सर्वे श्रृणुत भद्रं वो निश्चयेन सुनिश्चितम् ।**
**आत्मज्ञानात्परं नास्ति गुरोरपि च तद्विदः ।।**

*sarve śrṛṇuta bhadraṃ vo niścayena suniścitam* |
*ātmajñānātparaṃ nāsti gurorapi ca tadvidaḥ* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 128, Sloka 105

'Oh All Ye Gentlemen here, listen! This is the most supreme of all doctrines. There is nothing superior to Self-Knowledge. And for a Knower of Self, none can excel a Guru.'

**All the Assembled Saints and others:** 'Oh Mighty King Rama! Our salutations to you. What you say is very true. Your pronouncement further sanctifies it. May you forever be happy! We shall take leave of Sage Vasishta and proceed on to our respective places.'

**Valmiki:** "So saying the assembled saints got ready to leave. Suddenly there was a shower of flowers on Sri Rama.

"I have faithfully narrated to you the entire dialogue between Sage Vasishta and Rama. By the grace of the Supreme Guru May this conversation show the path to liberation to all the listeners!

**य इमं श्रृणुयान्नित्यं विधिं रामवसिष्ठयोः ।**
**सर्वावस्थोऽपि श्रवणान्मुच्यते ब्रह्म गच्छति ।।**

*ya imaṃ śrṛṇuyānnityaṃ vidhiṃ rāmavasiṣṭhayoḥ* |
*sarvāvastho'pi śravaṇānmucyate brahma gacchati* ||

Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, Sarga 128, Sloka 111

"Any one, however lowly he may be, will be liberated and will attain Oneness with Brahman on listening daily to the conversation of Sage Vasishta and Rama."

Sage Valmiki closed this Book 6 of Yoga Vasishta - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, (Chapter on Liberation) with those auspicious words on the effect of listening to Yoga Vasishta.

Let us now have a quick review of the subject matter covered in Book 6 of Yoga Vasishta - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, (Chapter on Liberation) before taking up Book 7 of Yoga Vasishta - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Uttarārdha , (Chapter on Liberation)

**83. Brief Review of Book 6 of Yoga Vasishta - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, (Chapter on Liberation)**

The philosophical knowledge that had to be imparted to Rama was effectively completed with Book 5, Upasama Prakarana, The Chapter on The Calm Down. Rama attained a tranquil mind by that time.

In spite of it, Sage Vasishta desired to continue his teaching into Book 6 of Yoga Vasishta - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, (Chapter on Liberation). He gave two main reasons for this. One is that it is necessary that a seeker should again and again listen to scriptures until the past impressions are totally annihilated. The second reason is that some of the average seekers in the assembly had not by that time achieved liberation and hence a repeat teaching was needed to help them. That is why symbolically, the current chapter opened with the preaching of Sage Vasishta and not with a question by Rama.

The sage said in the course of his teaching that even Brahma, Vishnu and Ishwar were part of nescience. When Rama contested this statement, the Sage, while explicating the issue, declared that knowledge too was a part of ignorance. He exhorted that it was essential to strive to transcend nescience. Rama raised then a question about the relative advantage between the Path of Knowledge and the Path of Yoga (referred to in Book 5, Yoga Vasishta, Upasama Prakarana, The Chapter on The Calm Down) in transcending nescience.

Sage Vasishta advised that a person might adopt a method that would be convenient to him based on his tendencies (*samskāra*) and indicated that the ultimate result would be the same following any one of the approaches. He further added that he recounted more life stories of seekers on the Path of Knowledge thus far and hence he would like to illustrate the life of a seeker who followed the Path of Yoga. Accordingly, he described the story of Bhusunda. He gave elaborate details on the techniques followed in the path of Yoga. Bhusunda's story also established that even the lowliest of people can adopt the Yoga approach which would carry them to the Path of Knowledge.

When the teaching was going on in that way, Rama was overcome by the force of the Knowledge gained by him and went into deep meditation. Sage Vasishta was not happy about it. For, he knew that serious minded people had a tendency to get absorbed in whatever a thing that they would take up for a deep study. So he woke up Rama from his meditation and taught him the sermon Lord Shiva had given to him (Sage Vasishta). Thus the story of Shiva was incorporated into his discourse.

Sage Vasishta illustrated a very unique blend of the devotional approach and knowledge path in the story of Shiva through the example of Mental Worship of Shiva. He finally proved that reverence to Shiva was the same thing as reverence to Self. Rama declared that he had no further doubts after hearing the yoga, knowledge and devotional approaches to Self-Knowledge. Even then, Sage Vasishta described the essence of the Supreme through the stories of Bilwa and Shila. In his explanation of the stories, Sage Vasishta pronounced that there was nothing like nescience and it was just an explanatory fiction of convenience while teaching Self-Knowledge. He declared that initially a proposition was made that ignorance existed and then finally the proposition was falsified.

Next the sage showed that the Lord (Ishwar) and the individual (*jīva*) were like an object and its image (a thing and its reflection) and proved that the image (reflection) was unreal. He continued the discussion saying that The Composite of Eight Cities had two states – with form and without form. We have already reviewed the intricacies of this discussion.

Sage Vasishta next taught the yoga of detachment and exemplified it through the story of Arjun. He discussed Bhagavad-Gita that Lord Sri Krishna would teach Arjun in future during the next oncoming Dwapar period. We presented a comparative study of the well-known verses from Gita before proceeding further.

In the current Book 6 of Yoga Vasishta - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, (Chapter on Liberation) the sage covered the path of Yoga through the story of Bhusunda, the path of devotion through the story of Shiva and the path of Detachment through the story of Arjun. He narrated the story of chūdāla to illustrate the final state of one who attained liberation while living, in how many ways liberation could be obtained and how normal life is led in a liberated state. An 18 Sarga strong introduction preceded this story. A strange story of dreams in dreams of Hundred Rudras was narrated as a part of the introduction. He indicated that an individual would keep continuously moving from one phantasm to another, from one dream to another. He said that the individual would feel smug that he was constant and stable in spite of this movement and declared that such conceit was itself an illusion. He defined liberation as transcending the illusion. He discussed the four types of Silences – They are:

1. Silence of Speech - no talking.
2. Silence of Organs - control of organs.
3. Statue like Silence - eschewing works that involve the body.

These three relate to the Saint of statue like silence.

4. Silence of Deep Sleep - this is the unwavering state of mind after obtaining Self Knowledge. It is also called the Fourth Silence or *Turiya* Silence. It can be achieved only by *jīvanmukta(s)*.

"Though all the four are referred to as Silences, the first three are binding because there is some admixing of nescience in them. They cannot liberate an individual."

Sage Vasishta then proceeded to describe liberation dividing it into three stages:

1. Focused Contemplation on Non-dual Truth.
2. Dissolution of life-force.
3. Control of mind.

He narrated the short story of Bhetala in this connection. It is almost similar to the enigmatic Yaksha questions talked about in Yoga Vasishta"– Book 3, Utpatti Prakarana, Chapter on 'Origination'. Therefore, he covered it in a swift manner.

Next comes the story of Bhageerath. Through this story, Sage Vasishta illustrated that in order to achieve the most significant tasks, one must first become a *jīvanmukta*, because only a liberated individual would conquer the most supreme objectives when he resumes work in the world. He showed in the story how Bhageerath achieved liberation and performance of action as per needs, before embarking upon bringing down the river Ganges from the Heavens.

After a thorough discussion on liberation, Sage Vasishta took up the Story of Chūdāla to highlight the differences in approach in the achievement of liberation right in this life. He adopted the technique of simultaneously presenting an analysis along with the progress of the events in the story.

In this story, the lady obtained liberation ahead of her husband. She tried hard for her husband's liberation. She achieved yogic accomplishments, became a Guru for her own husband and tested his capabilities without any bias. When her husband was firmly established in liberation, she made him rule their kingdom again.

Sage Vasishta demonstrated one more method of achieving liberation through the Story of Kacha, son of Brihaspati. Complete renunciation was lucidly explained through this story. He established from this story that I-consciousness (ego) was unreal and lacked 'beingness'. As further proof, he concocted the sub-story of an Unreal Man. The moral of the story was that the seeker should not become the doer-experiencer-renouncer but should become the Great Doer-Great Experiencer-Great Renouncer. To buttress the concepts, he narrated the small Story of Bhringeeswar.

Rama at this point recalled that a tenuous mind with reduced impressions was called '*sattva*' in the second Sarga of the current chapter. He asked sage Vasishta to explain clearly the qualities of '*sattva*'. In response to it, the sage narrated the conversation between Ikshwaaku and Manu. He reviewed once again the Sevenfold Steps of Knowledge Path. It was a repetition of what was already taught in the 118th Sarga with some changes in the nomenclature of the steps.

Thus 122 Sargas of the chapter came to an end. A review of the subject matter covered so far was presented from 123rd to 126th Sargas in the form of a dialogue between Rama and Sage Vasishta. A question on the Steps on the Path of Yoga came up once again. The sage offered an explanation but slightly changed the names one more time.

Rama entered into deep meditation after a recap of the teaching. However, Sage Valmiki desired to convey something more. The text, Yoga Vasishta, was primarily meant for the use of average middle ground seekers. But the teaching of Sage Vasishta was targeted at Rama who was a highly qualified student. Therefore, what remained to be done was to demonstrate that the teaching was applicable to ordinary folk. So Sage Valmiki interrupted the conversation of Sage Vasishta and Rama and introduced the dialogue he had with his disciple Bharadwaj at this point. Sage Valmiki enumerated in 15 steps the process of absorption to be followed by a seeker.

Bhradwaj raised a question about the desirability of abandoning Vedic stipulated rituals by a liberated individual. Sage Valmiki replied that it would depend on the residual karma of the seeker. He also added that a seeker who accepted the path of Vividisha Sanyasa should not take up any sacrificial rites. He underlined the importance of disciplined practice for a seeker.

Having by now completed a thorough discussion of the topic, Sage Valmiki prolonged the text with a question from Bharadwaj. Bhradwaj queried how Rama returned to the empirical world dealings from his thoughtless deep meditation. In reply, Sage Valmiki said that Sage Vasishta had assumed a subtle form and entered the *suśumna* nerve of Rama and aroused him from deep meditation. Taking advantage of the occasion, the propitious future course of Rama's life was presented through the words of Sage Viswamitra.

The chapter comes to a close with Rama's praise of his teacher and Sage Valmiki's pronunciation on the effect of reading this noble text.

Thus ends Book 6 of Yoga Vasishta - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Pūrvārdha, (Chapter on Liberation) which describes the entire course a seeker travels on in his quest for liberation. Sage Valmiki has another Book 7 of Yoga Vasishta - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Uttarārdha, (Chapter on Liberation) reserved for a description of the way great sages engage their minds in Brahman during their final stages. Let us now proceed to gather the gems of advice hidden in Book 7 of Yoga Vasishta - Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Uttarārdha, (Chapter on Liberation)

## 84. WORD GLOSSARY

| WORD | MEANING AS USED IN THE TEXT |
|---|---|
| Adhistana | Substratum. |
| Adhyaropa | Superimposition. |
| Aham | The sense of I, Embodied self, |
| Ahamkara | I-sense, I-consciousness, ego. |
| Ajapajapa | A yogic process of linking mantra japa with the cycles of breaths. For more details see Story of Bhusunda Under Section 8. |
| Anima | See under Siddhis. |
| Aniyata | Unregulated |
| Antahkarana | It is a combination of four types of intellectual activities called *Manas, Buddhi, Chitta*, and *Ahamkara*. Some texts translate 'antahkarana' as 'inner organ'. (The English word 'mind' generally denotes all the four functions of thinking, discrimination, memory and ego. But the word 'mind' is also used as a translation for *manas* in some texts. The Sanskrit word '*manas*' is also loosely used as a substitute for '*antahkarana*' in some contexts. The Sanskrit words *manas*, *buddhi* and *chitta* are also sometimes used to indicate *antahkarana*.) |
| Antas Sanga | Forgetting that 'Self' is actually 'Infinite Self' and craving for worldly pleasures. The word *sanga* is defined in several other ways too. The literal meaning of Antas sanga is internal attachment. |
| Apavaada | (i) Exception to a general rule. (ii) In the context of Advaita philosophy: A process of mentally negating a series of superimpositions (adhyaropa). |
| Asamprajnata | The state when the mind is identified with the Superme Self without any thought waves. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Atma or Jivatma. | Individual self. The word *atma* without any prefix denotes a Jiva |
| Avidya | Nescience; Ignorance about the Ultimate truth of Self of an individual. Maya and *Avidya* are sometimes used synonymously. |
| Bija | Seed, generally implies root cause. Sometimes it is used to indicate tiny things. Bija askhara (seed letter) refers to a letter that represents a very deep and elaborate meaning and spiritual significance. |
| Brahma | The personification of the Creator. |
| Brahma randhra | The vertex of the skull. It is said that there is a fine hole at the vertex and the Sushumna nadi passes up through this hole to connect the individual to the Brahma loka through Solar rays. Brahama randhra is the center of the seventh chakra (Sahasraara) which corresponds with the Pineal plexus. |
| Brahman | *Brih* means to expand, spread all over. It stands for the primordial undifferentiated changeless, limitless and everlasting, nameless substance that forms the substratum for the world. The Advaitic view is that Brahman is the Universal Self, the Absolute that appears as the world. Parabrahman is also used sometimes.<br><br>The word Brahman ending with 'n' is used to mean the Universal Self while the word Brahma ending with 'a' is used to mean the creator. Braahmana etymologically means one who is knowledgeable of Brahman. In common usage Braahman denotes a social class/caste. |
| Buddhi | A part of *antahkarana* which is associated with decision-making faculty. In general literature this word sometimes indicates intellect. |
| Chaitanya | Consciousness. |

(**Note:** A convention has been adopted in the text in capitalizing the words that describe the Supreme Self or Pure Consciousness. Consciousness (with capital 'C') refers to the Supreme Self; consciousness (lower case 'c') refers to general awareness. Other words like Knowledge - knowledge, Time - time, Truth - truth, Awareness - awareness etc. have also similar significance).

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| Chetya | Pereceivables, visibles, objects perceived in the world. The word "Percept" is used by us to indicate a map in the mind (brain) of what is perceived. |
| Chidaabhasa sphurti | Chidaabhasha literally means reflection of *chit* and denotes I-consciousness. Chidaabhasha sphurti means experiencing the I-consciousness. |

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| Chit | Same as *Chaitanya* |
| Chitta | A part of *antahkarana* associated with recapitulative faculty. In literature the words *manas, buddhi* and *chitta* are used to denote mind in general. |
| Chitta satta (Sarupa manonasa) | Annulment of mind is of two types. When the mind is annulled with its form retained, it is called sarupa manonasa or chitta satta. When the form also is eliminated, then it is arupa manonasa which is none other than Videhamukti. |
| Dama | Restraint of the external functions of the organs. |
| DRik | The name of the Seer when there is nothing to be seen; Used for the Brahman state. Potent-Looker. |
| DRisya | The object seen, perceived. |
| Gunas | Refers to *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* - These three are the fundamental qualities or tendencies that underlie all manifestations. |
| Hiranyagarbha | Literally means "One with a Golden Womb." Represents the unmanifested cosmic mind and the creator. |
| Japa | Repeated recitation of a Hymn or the name of a |
| God. Jiva or Jivatma | Individual self, embodied person. |
| Jivanmukta | One who realized that his self and the Supreme Self are One when he is still living. |
| Jnana samadhi | Knowledge-based Deep |
| Meditation. Jnani | One who realized Self. |
| Kalpa | Period equivalent to 4.32 billion earth years. |
| Kalpa | A span of 4.32 million years forms a set of Four Yugas. A thousand of such sets of Four Yugas make one day time of Brahman. Brahman has an equally long night time. A day time of Brahma is called a Kalpa. |
| Karma | Action. Also refers loosely to the effects of action. Karma is of three types viz. agami, sanchita and prarabdha. The accumulation of the effects of all actions of the countless past births is called sanchita karma. Out of the sanchita karma, a small portion is segregated to be enjoyed during the present life. This specific portion is called prarabdha. The part of sanchita which is going to give us future births is agami karma. |

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| Kartritva | Doership, owning the responsibility for doing an action. |
| Linga sarira (Sukshma sarira) | Subtle body which consists of five sense organs, the five action organs, the subtle five elements, antahkarana and prana. |
| Lambika Yoga | A process of Hatha Yoga wherein the nerve under the tongue is cut so that the tongue can be folded back to press up the uvula and receive the drops of nectar from sahasrara. |
| Mahat | Intellectual principle as source of *ahamkara* (I-consciousness). |
| Manana | Firming up in the mind that Brahman is the substrate of all things through continuous Reflection. |
| Manas | A part of *antahkarana* that is associated with thoughts and counter thoughts. Sometimes the word *manas* is used loosely to denote *antahkarana*. |
| Manvantara | Equivalent to 71 sets of Four Yugas. |
| Maya | Illusion. The veiling and projecting power of Brahman. It is like an operator "+". It does not associate with operands. Nor does it itself undergo any change. But it brings out an illusory change. Brahman + Thought is Hiranyagarba. |
| Mithya | One which is neither existent nor non-existent (apparition). |
| Mukti | Literally means liberation. It is of four types.<br>1. Saalokya mukti: living permanently in the same world as the worshipped God.<br>2. Saamipya mukti: Living permanently in close association of the worshipped God.<br>3. Saaruupya mukti: Attaining the same form as that of the worshipped God.<br>4. Saayujya mukti: Merging with the worshipped God. The above four types of liberation are followed in the Devotional path. Liberation in Advaita philosophy stands for complete identification with the Non-Dual Supreme Self, Brahman. |
| Nidhidhyasana | It is the practice through Contemplation or Meditation of repeatedly focusing the residual thought wave on Brahman after the completion of the process of sublation. |
| Nimitta kaarana | Subsidiary instrumental enabling cause. |
| Nirguna | Devoid of the three Gunas. |
| Niyata | Regulated. |

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| Niyati | The inexorable Laws of Nature. In this text this word is used to denote the natural principles of the universe, which are guided and determined by the thought process of the supreme creator, Hiranyagarbha. |
| Pancha Bhutas | The existence of an object in creation can be established only by experience. An object can be experienced only through the sense organs which are five in number. Each of the sense organ can detect only one attribute of the object and hence what constitute the creation can correspond to five fundamental properties. Accordingly there are five fundamental elements. These are earth, water, fire, wind and space. |
| Para or Parama | Higher, Supreme, Other, not belonging to this world. |
| Parabrahman | See Brahman. |
| Paramarthika | Paramartha means the Ultimate or the Supreme. That which is related to Pramartha is paramarthika. |
| Paramatma | Supreme Self, Universal Brahman. |
| Prarabdha | See Karma. |
| Parinama | Evolution. Formation of an object by re-arranging the parts in the material cause |
| Prakriti | Nature. Primal substance from which all things are created. According to Sankhya System there are two ultimate fundamentals of truth in the universe. They *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. *Purusha* is the one with consciousness but actionless. *Prakriti* also known as *Pradhana* is inert but it the creator of the universe. *Prakriti* has three intrinsic parts called *trigunas* i.e. *sattva, rajas* and *tamas.* |
| Pralaya | Complete merging, dissolution. |
| Pralaya | Dissolution (with capital "D") that comes at the end of one cycle of creation. End of Kalpa. |
| Pratyabhijna | Re-cognition after a lapse. Pratyaksha Pramana Direct cognition. In Advaita philosophy, direct cognition connotes the identity of 'individual self' with the Supreme Self without mediation. |
| Pravilaapana | Absorption. The mental process of traveling back taking the series of causes as steps and reaching the causeless Supreme Brahman. For details see Section 79. |
| Rajas | The second of the three gunas. It signifies activity, energy, motion, desire, anger etc. |
| Sadhak | Seeker on a spiritual path. |

Saadhana chatustaya sampatti — Fourfold Aids of Seeking:

1. Discrimination between the eternal and ephemeral objects of the world (*Nitya anitya vastu viveka*).

2. Renunciation of the worldly desires or desires pertaining to heaven (*Iha amutra phala bhoga viraga*).

3. The six qualities like control of internal organs, external organs etc. (*Samaadi shatka sampatti*).

4. Unceasing Desire for Liberation (*Mumukshatva*).

Sadrupi — In the form of *sat*, Pure Existence.

Saguna — Associated with the three gunas, attributes.

Samadhi — Thoughtless state of meditation. It is divided into many subtypes such as:

1. *Sabija samadhi* - a samadhi wherein the sacred sounds of hymns like 'Om' are concentrated upon.

2. *Nirbija samadhi* – a samadhi where no sounds or thoughts are allowed to remain.

3. *Savikalpa samadhi* – a samadhi where contemplation on the Supreme Self continues like an unbroken stream of oil.

4. *Nirvikalpa samadhi* – a samadhi where the aspirant's consciousness stays dissolved in the Supreme Self with an experience of total Oneness.

Samprajnata samadhi — Deep Meditation. This is an effortless process of having the stream of thoughts filled with the Brahman.

Samsara — State of Bondage. Also refers to the cycle of births and deaths, the visible world and the universe, which is considered to be a phantasmagoria.

Samskara — see sanskaras.

Samvit — This word has been used with different meaning in this text. (i) a thought wave on knowledge; (ii) Pure Knowledge; (iii) Potent Knower.

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| Samyak jnana | Proper Knowledge. |
| Sankalpa | Thoughts. Also sometimes intentions. |
| Sankalpa vikalpa | Thoughts and counter thoughts. |
| Sanskaras | Innate tendencies. Impressions of past actions carried in the mind. |
| Sat | Pure existence; beingness |
| Sarga | A sub-chapter; Section within a Chapter. |
| Saarupya Mukti | See under Mukti. |
| Satta samanya | Common beingness. |
| Sattva (satva) | The first of the three gunas. It signifies qualities like goodness, softness, wisdom and the like. |
| Shama | Control of internal organs (mind). Abandonment of desires. |
| Shravana | Translated as Listening to scriptures in the present text. This is a practice towards the conviction and affirmation that the meaning of all Vedic statements indicates the Oneness of Brahman. |
| Siddhi | Yogic accomplishments, attainments. There are eight types. (i) Anima: Miniaturization. (ii) Mahima: Expansion to colossal size. (iii) Laghima: Becoming light. (iv) Garima: Becoming heavy. (v) Praapti: Materialization. (vi) Praakaamya: Teletransportation. (vii) IIsatvam: Supremacy. (viii) Vasitvam: Control of one's own organs. |
| Sloka | A verse or stanza |
| Sphurana | A flash. |
| Sphurti | A flash-wave of thought. Arising of an experience. |
| Sthiti | Sustenance is the process of sustaining something (i.e. providing support physically or mentally). Some texts translate *sthiti* to mean maintenance (to cause something to continue in the same state or level). Other translations for sthiti adopted by some authors are: being; existing; subsistence; state. Subsistence usually means 'to maintain oneself at the minimum level.' The word 'state' is commonly used for physical states of matter (e.g.: water, ice and steam). Existence or beingness is commonly and used to translate the word 'sat.'<br><br>Hence we preferred here the word "sustenance" for *Sthiti* as it is more proximal to the connotation in Yogavaasishta. |
| Svasvarupa | One's own original form – refers to the Supreme Self. |

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| Taadaatmya-adhyaasa | *Taadaatmya* means identification of one with the other; *adhyaasa* means imagination. *Taadaatmyaadhyaasa* is an illusory feeling that 'that is myself' or 'that is something else'. |
| Tamas | The third of the three gunas. It signifies lethargy, inertia, lust, cruelty and the like. |
| Tapas | Austerity, meditation |
| Tapasvi | Ascetic; one who practices austerities. |
| Triputi | Triad of the observer-observed-observing and the like. |
| Turiya | The fourth state which is distinct from the wakeful, dream and deep sleep states and exists pervading all the states. |
| Turiyatita | The state beyond Turiya, generally corresponds to videhakaivalya. Turiyatita is used by a few teachers to explain the all pervading Oneness because some mistake Turiya as a 'state' comparable to the other three states of wakeful, dream and deep sleep states.) |
| Upadaana kaarana | Material cause. |
| Upadhi | Limiting adjunct. Also body. |
| Upasama | The calming down, stillness, quietitude, annulment or annihilation. |
| Utpatti | Creation, origination. |
| Vasanas | Impressions. Represent the influences from actions of past births. |
| Videhamukti | Liberation without body. |
| Vivarta | Illusory visualisation of an object. |
| Vritti | Thought-wave, a modification in the mind. |
| Vyavahara | Mundane, worldly, transactional, operational, empirical. |
| Yuga | See Kalpa. |